

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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THE FIRST ISLAMIC MISSION IN THE U.K. ESTABLISHED 1913 C.E. AS THE WOKING MUSLIM MISSION

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October 2001 C.E. Meeting

Assalamu alaikum

Venue: *Dar-us-Salaam*

Date: Sunday, 7th October 2001

Time: 3 p.m.

Topic: The Significance of *Fatiha*

by

Mr Nasir Ahmad B.A., LL.B.

Regular Activities

Radio programme Every Friday at 2 pm on Panjab Radio (Astra Digital Satellite ch. 880).

Dars-i Quran Third Sunday of every month at 3 pm.

Meeting of the Executive First Sunday of every month at 2 pm.

Meeting of the Jamaat First Sunday of every month at 3 pm.

Death of Jesus

by *Shahid Aziz*

One of the objections raised against Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad sahib, the Promised Messiah, is that he broke with the *ijma'*, or the consensus, of the *ummah* (Muslim Community) regarding the death of the prophet Jesus. It is contended that originally all Muslims believed that the prophet Jesus was bodily raised up to heavens by Allah to save him from death on the cross. It is further contended that it was Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad sahib who first put forward the idea that the prophet Jesus died a natural death on this earth.

Much of the discussion on this topic centres on verse 54 of chapter 3 of the Holy Quran (The Family of Imran). This reads:

“When Allah said: O Jesus, I will cause thee to die (*mutawaffi-ka*) and exalt thee in my presence ...”

The discussion relates to the meaning of the word *mutawaffi-ka*, in this verse, which has been translated by Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ali as ‘to die’. Many non-Ahmadi commentators have also

used exactly the same meaning but others say that *mutawaffi-ka* means ‘to take’ and it shows that Allah took Jesus bodily.

However, before a discussion of what this word means we need to understand the context in which this revelation was received by the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Imam Ibn Kathir writes in his commentary:

“The Holy Prophet (*sas*) wrote a letter to the people of Najran ...” (vol. 1, p. 436),

and in response

“a delegation of sixty people was sent to the Holy Prophet (*sas*) ... They asked: ‘Then tell us who was the father of Jesus’. The Holy Prophet (*sas*) remained silent, but in reply, verses of the chapter *Ahl-Imran*, from the beginning to the verses before this, were revealed.” (pp. 433–434)

Thus the background to the revelation of these verses is that they were revealed during a discussion with Christians in response to the Christian claims regarding the Divinity of Jesus, his miracles, and the Virgin Birth. Commenting on verse 54, Imam Ibn Kathir himself

has this to say:

“Qatada and some other commentators say that the meaning is that ‘I will raise you towards myself; after that I will cause you to die’. Ibn Abbas (*r*) says, (it is) ‘I am going to cause you to die ...’ Wahb ibn Manbah says that God, while raising him, on the first day caused him to remain dead for three hours ... Most commentators believe that by *wafat* is meant sleep.” (vol. 1, p. 430)

Imam Ibn Kathir wrote this commentary some seven hundred years ago. In it he admits to two things. First, he tells us that at least one companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, i.e. Hazrat Ibn Abbas (*r*) believed that the Holy Quran says that Jesus died on this earth.

Second, Ibn Kathir also tells us that most commentators believe that this verse speaks of the physical ascension of Jesus. This shows that, seven hundred years ago, at least a minority of commentators of the Holy Quran believed that the Quran speaks of a natural death of Jesus and not physical ascension.

(Continued on page 2)

An objection may be raised saying that the meaning of *mutawaffi-ka* attributed to Hazrat Ibn Abbas may be in some weak or spurious tradition and that Imam Ibn Kathir has picked it up and related it simply for the sake of providing everyone's opinion about what this word means. The simple answer to this is that Hazrat Ibn Abbas's view is given in the *Sahih* of Bukhari, which is regarded by all Sunni Muslims as the most authentic collection of traditions. It tells us that Hazrat Ibn Abbas said that, if instead of the word *mutawaffi-ka* in verse 54 of chapter 3 of the Holy Quran, we use the word *mumitu-ka* (which literally means to die), the meaning becomes clear.

These are not isolated instances. Rehmatullah Tariq says:

“*Tawaffa* means absolute death.

“It is pointless to write in detail on this subject because, in the debates between Ahmadis and non-Ahmadis, the amount of explanation given of the meaning of the word *tawaffa* is so much that, probably no other word has been explained in such detail. However, it is necessary to bring to notice some Islamic thinkers some of whom lived centuries ago and so far as my knowledge is concerned they were not Ahmadis or even aware of Ahmadiyyat. Thus, as an independent observer it is not possible for me to ignore their opinion that they all took *tawaffa* to mean death. Here I am pointing to: Shia commentator Allamah Tabrasi (d. 1153), Ibn Arabi (d. 1240), Imam Ibn Qyeem (d. 1350), Imam Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Yusuf (d. 1344), Allamah Mustafa al Maraighi (d. 1928), Allamah Mahmud Shaltut (d. 1963), Allamah Rashid Rida (d. 1935), Qazi Badr-ud-Din Mahmud (d. 1420) ...” (*Burhan-ul-Quran*, p. 277)

Non-Muslim scholars who translated the Holy Quran into English also rendered the word *mutawaffi-ka* as ‘to die’. George Sale translated the Holy Quran into English in 1734. Here is how this verse is translated in the 1887 edition:

“When God said, O Jesus, verily I will cause thee to die ...” (p. 38)

Rodwell's translation appeared in 1861. He translates the same verse as:

“Remember when God said, ‘O Jesus! Verily I will cause thee to die ...’” (p. 391)

At this point Rodwell gives an interesting note. He says:

“It would also seem from Sura [lviii] xix. 34, that Muhammad supposed Jesus to have died a natural death ...”

The point is that it is in the interest of the Christian missionaries to say that, according to the Holy Quran, Jesus bodily ascended to the heavens and is still alive there, because they can then claim that this makes Jesus superior to the Holy Prophet (*sas*) who passed away on this earth. Even so, keeping in mind the Arabic idiom, both these gentlemen have translated *mutawaffi-ka* as ‘to die’; one of them going so far as to say that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*sas*) probably believed Jesus to have died a natural death. The context in which this verse was revealed, i.e. a discussion with Christians about the status and life of Jesus, makes this a very important observation by Rodwell.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, a contemporary of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad sahib renders this verse as:

“When God said: ‘O Jesus, without doubt I am going to cause you to die ...’” (*Tafsir-ul-Quran*, p. 17)¹

He further says:

“*mutawaffi-ka* usually means death. The Holy Quran itself interprets this word as such for it says: Allah takes (*mutawaffi-ka*) souls at the time of their death, and those that die not, during their sleep (39:42).” (p. 43)

Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi translates this verse thus:

“O Isa, surely I shall make thee die” (*Tafsir-ul-Quran*, vol. 1, p. 232)

And lastly, Maulana Maudoodi, who believes in the physical ascension of Jesus is forced to admit:

“(here) the Quran uses words which at least leave the possibility open of physical ascension.” (*Tafhim-ul-Quran*, vol. 1, p. 258)

Thus, it is wrong to say that by translating *mutawaffi-ka* as ‘to die’ Ahmadis have introduced new meanings into the Holy Quran or that there was, at any time, a unanimous belief of the *ummah* that Jesus physically ascended to the heavens and that Ahmadis have fractured this unity. (Extract from Khutbah Jummah, delivered 31 August 2001)

Ar-Rahman IV

by Hazrat Dr Basharat Ahmad

“He has made the two seas to flow freely — they meet:

“Between them is a barrier which they cannot pass.

“Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?”

We must bear in mind here that Allah, Most High, employs a particular system in this section of the Holy Quran in that He always puts forward the physical as proof of the spiritual reality. Therefore, if we look at the previous verses we will see that they all follow the same arrangement, and in these verses under discussion we notice also that the physical is followed by the hidden or spiritual. In other words, the manifest provides evidence of the hidden.

In the physical world, we can all observe that when the sweet river flows into the sea, the water of which is salty, it does not mix with the sea water for quite a long distance inwards. In fact, even the colour remains conspicuously distinct, and if we drink it we will discover that there is a pronounced difference in taste between the sweet river water and the salty seawater. In fact, there is a barrier between these two kinds of water and in scientific terminology this is called ‘surface tension’. Thus, they provide ample testimony of a spiritual reality in that, as far as knowledge is concerned, there are also two seas — a sea of physical knowledge that is called science, and this is salty, and a sea of spiritual knowledge called the Holy Quran, which is sweet. Just as the physical existence of all living things depends on this sweet water,

1. Originally, Sir Syed's (incomplete) commentary, *Tafsir-i Ahmadi*, was published in parts; each part relating to a chapter of the Holy Quran. Thus, in the original, the reference is volume 2, page 17. It was reprinted, for the first time after independence, in 1994. Because of the stigma attached in Pakistan to the name Ahmadi, the name was changed to *Tafsir-ul-Quran* and, without renumbering any of the pages, all the volumes were combined into one.

so, too, man's spiritual life depends on the sweet water of the Holy Quran. As there is great resemblance between the physical and the spiritual, for this reason the two seas of physical and the spiritual science must meet and flow together. That is, there are countless similarities between them, but in spite of that, just as there is a barrier between the physical and the spiritual, a similar veil exists between these categories of knowledge. In other words, it is not essential for an expert in one field of knowledge to be equally expert in another field. For example, a scientist is not required to be a religious scholar and *vice versa*.

Indeed, this is a well-known fact, for even today in the different branches of physical science we witness the spectacle everyday of an expert in one field of knowledge being totally ignorant in another area. For example, a doctor is quite unacquainted with the science of engineering and *vice versa*. So, in medical matters an engineer's opinion carries no weight whilst in engineering business a doctor's pronouncement is of no value. Similarly, however advanced Europe and America may be in the material sciences, when it comes to spiritual knowledge, they are no wiser than school children.

A prophecy

These verses: *He has made the two seas to flow freely — they meet: Between them is a barrier which they cannot pass*, also embody a prophecy. One possible interpretation is that the two seas will mix and flow together sometime in the future even though there is a barrier between them at the present time. That is, a time will come when physical knowledge (science) and spiritual knowledge (Quranic science) will merge, and the existing barrier between them will be lifted. By the fusion of the Quran and science is meant that people will come to realise that Quranic knowledge is also a science, but a spiritual one, and that physical science serves as merely a servant to it. In other words, physical science will begin to throw light on the subtle and esoteric truths of spiritual knowledge, so that the more a person reads the book of nature and derives knowledge from it, the more will his

faith be strengthened. In this way, more insight will be gained into the deep and subtle truths of the Holy Quran, and its values will gradually become established as the eternal verities they are.

It will be an act of ingratitude on our part if we do not proclaim the role played by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the *Mujaddid* of the fourteenth century, in removing this barrier between religion and science. In today's world of rampant materialism he was the first to make religion a science and present it in such a way that highly respected and eminent scientific experts in scientific circles were forced to acquiesce. Space does not permit a more detailed explanation, but whoever desires further information can peruse his books and satisfy himself of the truth of this observation. In short, we are fortunate to witness today a clear manifestation of this prophecy unfolding before our very eyes.

At this juncture, there is another point worthy of consideration. Sometimes a certain matter is hidden behind an invisible veil and seems to be beyond human comprehension. Then a clear physical sign from the Almighty is established so that it may serve as proof of the spiritual point in question. An example of this is the good news that came to Prophet Zacharias of the birth of a son. This seemed so unlikely to him that he was struck with amazement and requested of Allah: *My Lord, give me a sign* (19:10), whereupon Allah gave him this sign: *He said: Thy sign is that thou speak not to people for three successive nights being in sound health* (19:10).

It is common knowledge among doctors that very old people often lose their power of speech for a while and this is known as 'temporary aphasia'. Accordingly, before the birth of Prophet John this condition befell Prophet Zacharias and this furnished a physical sign of the miraculous birth.

Similarly, a physical sign of the merging of the two seas of knowledge, the physical and the spiritual — something which to all appearances seems to be an unbelievable astonishing event — was created by the joining of the Red and the Mediterranean Seas, the

former being an Eastern sea whilst the latter is a Western sea. These were the two seas, eastern and western, which should have flowed into each other, but there was a barrier between them in the form of a piece of land called the Isthmus of Suez. Accordingly, in this age, that barrier was removed and the two seas, one eastern and the other western, were joined through the creation of the Suez Canal. This actuality was a manifest physical indication that the time has now come when the two seas of eastern spiritual knowledge and western physical science will freely mix.

Now if this is read together with the earlier verse, *Lord of the two Easts and the Lord of the two Wests*, it becomes abundantly clear that when Allah will allow the sun of the Holy Quran to rise in the West, then that will be the time of the meeting of the sea of physical science which is flourishing in the West with the sea of spiritual knowledge which is dominant in the East. That will be the time, too, when science will become the handmaiden of religion. And the event which will usher in that auspicious period will be the meeting of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. So the time of the physical merging of East and West is an indisputable indication of a similar spiritual coalescence of East and West. How wonderful a blessing is this which Allah has destined for man and how sinful is it to deny these favours!

There come forth from them pearls and corals.

Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

We are told here that whether it is a sea of physical or spiritual knowledge, from both innumerable priceless jewels are obtained. That is, just as divers go down into the physical sea and bring out precious stones like pearls and corals, so, too, spiritual divers bring out countless invaluable treasures of deep insights and subtle points from the sea of spiritual knowledge. If people with knowledge and expertise bring out from the sea of physical knowledge priceless pearls and corals of knowledge by which man is able to travel across the oceans and fly through the air and make use of electricity, a similar thing takes place

in the spiritual world. Here, too, experts in the field of spiritual knowledge acquire precious pearls and corals of wisdom from the sea of spiritual science and through this man is able to traverse the ocean of divine gnosis, to soar high in the sky of spirituality and to make use of marvellous spiritual powers that make physical energy and lightning look like nothing in comparison.

The power of physical science does not enable man to fly beyond the magnetic sphere of the earth but the strength of spiritual power enables the spiritual traveller to traverse the sky and his spiritual powers transport him from the earth to the throne of his Creator. Thus man ought to be grateful to his Lord for these extensive spiritual favours which vastly outstrip all physical blessings and he should give full praise to his Creator for these spiritual bounties instead of denying them.

A significant interpretation

In specially choosing the words *pearls* and *corals*, there is another Divine sign that comes to our notice and that is, that corals used to be taken out of the Red Sea whilst pearls were brought out from the Mediterranean Sea. So, in the merging of these two seas, special characteristics of these two kinds of precious pearls also serve as a sign.

*And His are the ships reared aloft in the sea like mountains,
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

These verses tell us that the ships that sail on the seas are also favours granted by Allah, Most High, to man, for if there were no ships how could man cross the oceans? In the same way, Divine teachings perform the function of tall ships which come in the form of Divine revelation by means of which man is able to traverse the ocean of spiritual knowledge. Otherwise, if he is left to his own devices man will never be able to make this voyage.

In addition, the similitude of the ship can be farther extended: just as ships transport provisions from one place to another for the maintenance of man's physical livelihood, so, too, will they come into use in order to carry the teachings of the Holy Quran, that is, spiritual sustenance, to the people of the West. By means

of these very ships literature and missionaries for the teaching and propagation of Islam will be carried from the East to the West and thus the sun of spirituality shall rise in the West. These ships, which are lofty like mountains and which were built for the transaction of worldly business, will also perform the service of Allah's religion. **At the time of the revelation of the Holy Quran, ships as tall as mountains were not in existence. This was knowledge of the unseen which the Holy Quran vouchsafed to the world hundreds of years in advance, when it disclosed that ships high as mountains would be built and they would be pressed into the service of Allah's religion.**

The second section of this *surah* tells us that however stupendous the advances man makes in worldly knowledge, all these things are transient. The only permanent things are those that are done for the sake of seeking Allah's pleasure. Therefore, blessed indeed is he who turns his attention to this fact and gives precedence to Allah's pleasure over all other matters. He who turns away from this is heedless and his end will be a bitter one. Even in this life he will never enjoy peace and quiet. As a matter of fact, despite all his dazzling worldly progress he cannot be saved from anxiety and restlessness, war and destruction. As regards the Hereafter, what else can he expect besides pain and punishment?

*Every one on it passes away —
And there endures forever the person of thy Lord, the Lord of glory and honour.
Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*

Jalal means the highest point of greatness whilst *dhul jalal* means the Lord of Majesty, that is, the One Who possesses such power that to disobey Him is to court punishment and destruction.

Dhul ikram means the Most Generous One, obedience to Whom brings blessings and favours in abundance.

Wajhu Rabbika signifies the Being or Person of our Lord. There is another meaning which Imam Raghīb records in his *Mufradat* from 'Abdullah ibn al-Raza who says that by *wajh* is meant a certain thing by

means of which a particular point is reached, that is, such good deeds that are done for the sake of seeing the countenance or obtaining the pleasure of Allah, or those things which Allah desires to make everlasting. And this is the significance that is applicable here.

Allah, Most High, wishes to explain to us this point, that there is no doubt that physical science is also a sea from which man acquires innumerable priceless treasures, by means of which he can and does make astounding improvement in life. But ultimately all these things pass away and nothing remains of them. Thus, wise is the man who concentrates on those endeavours which are lasting, for these are the works that will remain with him forever and provide everlasting life for him. Indeed, in this transient world, the only permanent things are those with which Allah is pleased; for only Allah and His goodly pleasure are perpetual: everything else vanishes. Thus, fortunate is the one whose good deeds are done for the sake of Allah's pleasure and who lives in such a way as if every atom of his being operates totally extinguished in the will of his Lord. That is the death (*fana fi-Allah*) that heralds a new life which is everlasting. After this extinction of the self, the righteous servant reaches the lap of Divine Providence and becomes a recipient of perpetual life, and then the paths of continuous progress are opened to him.

This permanence is not something automatic, but depends on the pleasure of Allah. Everything otherwise is transitory and will always be so. If, therefore, everlasting life is the cherished goal, then, for the sake of our Lord, we should subject our good deeds to the will of Allah to such an extent that our desires are completely annihilated and our whole life is made subservient to the pleasure of Allah. This reverence is deservedly due to our Lord, for His glory and honour certainly demand that we should efface our own ambitions in preference to His will, and that we should reach the ultimate limit in our obedience to Him in order to win His pleasure. It is only then that we can come under the umbrella of Allah's Providence and be blessed with everlasting life. (From *Anwarul Quran*, Part 2).