A special issue in honor of
the Promised Messiah and Mahdi,
Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad,
najjaddid of the 14th century A.H.

A mosque in Isfahan, Iran.

Photo by Larry Worthington
Who Else, Then, Was the Mujaddid of the Fourteenth Century Hijra?

By MAULANA MUHAMMAD ALI, M.A., LL.B.

The bi’rath (appointment) of Mujaddids

God has brought prophethood to an end with the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of God be upon him). As this has been an indisputable fact among the Muslim ummah (nation), similarly, the raising of mujaddids (renovators) has been agreed upon by all. Accordingly, Abu Dawud, the most authentic book of hadith, after al-Bukhari and al-Muslim, from among the six authentic collections of reports (Sihah Sittah), mentions that:

"Most surely Allah will raise for this community at the head of every century one who shall revive for it its faith."

Such savants of Islam are known as mujaddids. Tajdid (renovation) signifies purging Islam of all alien conceptions that have entered into it with the passage of time and presenting the picture of Islam in its original splendor. As time affects everything it affects the religion of the people as well. But this does not mean that the religion itself keeps on changing. What actually happens is, that interested persons introduce such doctrines into it, by ignorance or mischief, which do not belong to the original faith. It is these extraneous matters which bring about a change in its form. The task of a mujaddid is to remove these errors and restore the religion to its pristine purity. This should, however, be borne in mind, that the expression yab’ath—God will raise or appoint—has occurred in the hadith for the advent of a mujaddid, and the appointment of anybody from among human beings only signifies his appointment from God. The same term has also been used in the Qur’an for the appointment of prophets and messengers. This means that the appointment of a mujaddid indicates the raising of a particular person who has been gifted with Divine inspiration and communication for a particular purpose. The ‘ulama’ and imams, no doubt, have always been present among Muslims and they, too, are servants of Islam, but a mujaddid is a servant of Islam who is communicated to by God and is Divinely appointed for a specific object for the eradication of such errors which have weakened and distorted the original form of Islam. A mujaddid, thus, comes for the renovation of true religion and such persons have been appearing at the head of each century.

Authenticity of the hadith of mujaddid

Imam Jalal al-Din Suyuti (d. 911 A.H. or 1505 C.E.) writes in Mirqat al-Sa’ud that all the preservers (huffaz) of hadith have agreed on the authenticity of the report about mujaddid, and the forerunners (mutagaddim) like Hakim (d. 405 A.H., 1014 C.E.) and Baihaqi (d. 458 A.H. or 1065 C.E.) and their successors like Abu al-Fadl of Iraq and Ibn Hajar all approve of its genuineness. Ibn Asakir has also written, after accepting the truth of this report, that this proved the coming of mujaddids at the beginning of every century. Shah Wali Allah of Delhi (1114–1176 C.E.) in his books Izalat al-khifa (p. 41) and Tashkimat-i-Illahiyya (p. 35) also admits the authenticity of this hadith. The second argument for its correctness is that this hadith is confirmed by other reports of the Prophet. In fact, its basis lies in the Qur’an, which declares that, in spite of the termination of prophethood, God will continue to speak with the honored and chosen people of this ummah, and for the eradication of some serious errors He would himself guide the followers of Muhammad. Thus God’s communication with non-prophets and granting of revelation to them is the basis of this report, and God’s speaking with non-prophets

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Dear Readers,

We are presenting “The Promised Messiah Number” of The Islamic Review to you. The Promised Messiah passed away on May 25, 1908, after fulfilling his mission. Therefore, we deemed it fit to dedicate our May issue to his blessed memory.

Like Jesus Christ, the personality of the Promised Messiah too has become very controversial. Jesus Christ was a righteous personage of human history, a prophet of God, conceived by a woman and born out of a woman, like all other human beings. He tasted death like all other human beings, yet a large number of his followers consider him a god. He was called a “son of God” in certain Biblical predictions only in a metaphorical sense, yet he fell prey to the pagan concept of deification and his followers think that his mother conceived him from God (forbid). This pagan concept of ladies conceiving from God was common before Jesus Christ. We know Alexander the Great’s mother used to claim the same. On the other hand, the Jews called him a “liar,” and “impostor,” and a “heretic.”

Just like the messiah of two thousand years back, the messiah of the present age was grossly misunderstood. He only claimed to be a mujaddid, a mufaddath, the mahdi and the promised messiah. He always and at all times denied any claim to prophethood of any kind, yet a large number of his followers (better known as Qadianis) attributed a claim of prophethood to him. He repeatedly said, “One who attributes a claim to prophethood to me, he fabricates a lie against me,” and “They falsely attribute a claim to prophethood to me so that they coin an excuse to declare me a kafir (heretic).” Yet none else but his son Mirza Mahmud Ahmad, in his quest after establishing a family hereditary priestcraft in the name of Khilafat, joined hands with the worst enemies of the Promised Messiah in attributing a claim to prophethood to him. Though with different objectives, a large numbers of his followers as well as his opponents “fabricated lies” against the Promised Messiah.

We have dedicated this issue to the memory of this greatest man of this century in the religious world, with a view to unveil certain truths about him and to introduce the man to readers in the United States and Europe. We have deemed it fit to reproduce a few articles of the late Maulana Muhammad Yakub Khan, the Imam of Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, U.K., and the editor of the weekly The Light, Lahore, and The Civil Military Gazette, Lahore, a well-known English daily of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. The articles were written in 1937 under the title of Quest after God. We are reprinting these, for we could not have done better than this in revealing various aspects of the life of the Promised Messiah. Probably no shorter yet comprehensive biography of a great man is to be found in English literature than The Quest after God.

Maulana Muhammad Ali’s “No Claim to Prophethood” sheds light on the claims of the Promised Messiah. It is an article by one who lived through that history and drank deep at the fountain of knowledge and spirituality unfolded by the Promised Messiah.

The claims of other mujaddids will definitely interest our readers, as the Promised Messiah was a mujaddid amongst them. He can be better understood amongst the people where he belonged.

We hope you will like this issue.

Sincerely yours,
The Publishers

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The Great Man’s Lot

It is a bare truism that the above verse of the Holy Qur’an embodies. Such happens to be the way of the world. Whenever a Great Soul appears amongst a people, be he a Prophet, a Reformer, a Seer or a Saint, up they rise in revolt against him. To begin with, they ridicule him. That failing in thwarting him in his great resolve, they ostracize him. Then comes persecution of all imaginable kinds. Strange psychology this, but not hard to understand. They cling to their received notions and would on no account part with them. The Great Soul comes with a wider outlook on life and out of sympathy wants to emancipate his fellows from the slough of the low and the mean. But all weeping is by its very nature an unpleasant process. They refuse to be weaned off from their conventional modes of thought and life. Anyone who should dare attempt such a thing is considered a dangerous person. They declare a wholesale crusade against him.

Such happens to be the way of a fallen humanity. When alive, they send their Great Men to the gallows; when dead, they raise memorials to them. The history of every nation, secular as well as religious, abounds in such tomfoolery. Socrates, whose name commands universal respect in the world of thought today, was, in his day, considered one such dangerous person. In the Greece of pagan days, he had the vision of soul to see through the futility of the prevalent superstitions and had the courage of conviction to proclaim it from the housetops. God is one, he preached, and it was enough of an ultimatum for the forces of conventionalism to be up against him. Charged with corrupting the youth, he had to pay for it with his life. The self-same Socrates who was made to take a cup of poison by his own compatriots for a fault none other than preaching the Unity of God, is today honored not only in the land of his martyrdom but all the world over. Take another such great martyr to popular wrath, Jesus. Today, he is given a seat on the right hand of God Himself but we all know what treatment he got at the hands of his own people in his day. Scoffed at, ridiculed, made to wear the crown of thorns and ultimately sent to the Cross! Such has been the common lot of all Great Men. Nor could the Holy Prophet Muhammad and his companions escape that fate. By their own kith and kin they were subjected to the worst of persecutions. He came as Rahmatul Lil Alam in, mercy to the whole of mankind. But what was the reception he got in his own day? They ridiculed him, called him all sorts of names. While prosrating before God, they placed the entrail of a camel on his neck. They threw rubbish at him; they pelted him and were not content with anything short of taking his life and did everything they could to take it. Coming down to the history of Islam, we find the same story repeat itself over and over again. Hardly has there been one Muslim saint or scholar but has been meted out the same treatment by the Muslims themselves. Take the first four Caliphs, the Khulafa-i-Rashidin. With all their love of Islam and devotion to Islam, there are hundreds of thousands of Muslims who consider it an act of piety to throw mud on someone or other of them. Imam Abu Hanifa, the well-known founder of the Hanafi School, was in his day condemned as a kafir, put in prison and ultimately poisoned. Imam Shafa’i was called “worse than the devil,” was sent as a prisoner from Yeman to Baghdad and on the way he was abused by the people and all along. Imam Malik was made to stand on a camel’s back, was taken around on show and given seventy stripes—and all this just for difference of opinion on a religious point! Imam Hambal was kept in prison for twenty-eight long months. Every evening they would bring him out, flog him in public and spit at his face. Imam Bukhari was banished from his birthplace and was not allowed to lay his head anywhere, till, tired of life, he prayed to God to call him back to Himself. Bayazid Bustami was seven times expelled from his hearth and home. Sheikh Shibli was actually condemned to death. Sheikh Abdul Qadir of Baghdad, Sheikh Mohy-ud-Din Ibn al-Arabi, Maulana Jalal-ud-Din, the renowned author of Masnavi, Imam Ghazali, the great Muslim philosopher, every one of them was decorated with this ungrateful insignia of kufur. Mujaddid Alf-Sani had for two years rotted in Gawalir Jail. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad would not have been the Great Soul of the day had he escaped this common fate of his class. It was only something of a piece with the same mentality that held this Great Son of Islam up to public obloquy and gave him all sorts of uncharitable epithets. His one reply to all these uncharitable fatwas of kufur that were issued against him was:

"After God, with the love of Muhammad I am intoxicated. If this be kufur, by God I am the greatest of infidels.”

—Muhammad Yakub Khan
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has been repeatedly mentioned in the Qur’an. For instance, this is acknowledged, that Moses’ mother was not a prophetess, but still the Qur’an clearly says:

And We revealed to Moses’ mother, and at another place, it has been stated:

When We revealed to thy mother that which was revealed. In both these verses Moses’ mother has been referred to as the recipient of Divine revelation and this revelation was positive to such an extent that she put her son Moses in the river. Similarly Jesus’ mother was also spoken to by angels without her being a prophetess. Again the disciples of Jesus were not prophets but they, too, are mentioned as having received God’s revelation:

When I revealed to the disciples. About the righteous servants (aada) of this ummah it has also been mentioned in the Qur’an:

The angels descend upon them and that:

For them is good news in this world’s life. These mubashshirat (good news) in authentic reports have been called a part of prophethood:

There has remained nothing of prophethood except mubashshirat (good news).

Moreover, in reports that have been unanimously agreed upon, it has been mentioned that as God spoke with the non-prophets from among other nations, so shall He communicate with the followers of the Prophet. Thus, if it is necessary for a mujaddid to have Divine communication both the Qur’an and the genuine reports confirm that this ummah will be favored with such communications.

Claims of other mujaddids

The third strong argument in favor of the authenticity of this hadith is that many renowned Muslim saints have openly declared themselves, in accordance with this report, to be the mujaddids of their respective centuries. To quote one instance I refer to al-Shaikh Ahmad of Sirhind of India who is known with the title of Mujaddid Alif Thani (i.e., mujaddid of the second thousand) and among the common people he is referred to as Mujaddid Sahib. His claim can be found in the following words in his Maktubat (Letters):

“This knowledge has been derived from the illumination of the lamp of prophethood... and the possessor of this knowledge and wisdom is the mujaddid of this thousand years... and it must be remembered that a mujaddid has passed at the head of each century but the mujaddid of a thousand years is different from the mujaddid of the century."

This statement is true as the popularity of Hadrat Shaikh Ahmad (in that part of the world) has excelled all other previous mujaddids.

The mujaddid of the fourteenth century of the Hijrah

Thus, when it has been established from the Qur’an, Hadith, sayings and claims of other mujaddids that the coming of a mujaddid at the beginning of each century is essential, then exactly at the head of the fourteenth century Hijrah the claim of being a mujaddid by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian was in just in accordance with the spirit and traditions of Islam. It is, however, quite simple to understand why the coming of a mujaddid at the head of each century has been considered essential. Had no mujaddid appeared at the beginning of this century it would not only have invalidated the promise of the hadith, but also the principle of the Qur’an and would have also created doubts about the claims of the Muslim saints and imams. Although more than one mujaddid appeared sometimes in the past centuries, at the head of the fourteenth century none claimed to be a mujaddid except Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian. Leaving aside these points, which are self-evident, if we look into the matter more deeply, his position as a renovator becomes well established. He was gifted with Divine communication even fourteen or fifteen years before his claim and was also champion of the cause of Islam, a great defender of Islam against the onslaughts of other religions. He did not only deal in writing with the old religions like Christianity and Hinduism but also made a thorough analysis of all new movements in India such as Brahmu Samaj and Arya Samaj. The name of none else can be cited who stood so firm to defend and extend the cause of Islam at that critical moment. His appearance was like the rising of the sun for the help of Islam in that hour of darkness. And years before his actual claim, his piety, righteousness, devotion to God and his scholarship were admitted on all hands. At the time of his laying claim to mujaddidiyyah the book which was published by him drew the best praise from a person who turned out later to be the worst enemy of the Ahmadia Movement. It was written about it that the like of it has not appeared in Islam before. Such a remark was made when the Founder’s claim of mujaddidiyyah had already been known to the world. This is, in fact, a strong evidence for seekers of truth. Even before his claim he was doing so much for the cause of Islam that it could only be compared with one of the great mujaddids of the past. After proclaiming his mission his work gathered more strength than before. The seed which was sown by him has grown up into a huge tree the branches of which have now spread in the East and the West.

If Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is not the mujaddid of the fourteenth century who else is the claimant to this office?

Every Muslim, every lover of the Qur’an and Hadith and everyone who has any respect for the righteous servants (aada) of this ummah must consider seriously that if Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is not the mujaddid who else is a claimant to this office in this age. The principle of the Qur’an cannot go wrong, the Hadith of mujaddid cannot be a mere fabrication and those who have already laid claim to be the mujaddids according to this report cannot be looked upon as mere impositors. If all this is true, then true also is the fact that a mujaddid must have been raised at the head of this century. And who is that person except Mirza Ghulam Ahmad? History to which we are ourselves a witness does not mention the name of any other mujaddid. The name of this person or that is cited in haste at times by some persons but the point worth considering is whether

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This world was quiet and closed like a bud; I came as a stepping in of the spring breeze.

What was the meaning, what was the mission, what was the message of this Great Soul of our age, alas, it is not the lot of many men to understand, appreciate, admire and adore. Though in this world, such souls are not of this world. To all appearances, they live in our midst, they move in our midst and have their being in our midst, yet as a matter of fact, they are as far above us as those solitary silver clouds high up in the heavens. There at those celestial heights, far above the din and dust of the earth, they live in the perpetual sunshine of Divine beauty and love. There they have the vision which false fears and false hopes of this world dim not. It is the mist of these mundane cares and worries that gives us the blurred vision which we, the common run of worldly men and women, have. Through glasses thus befogged we look at things and events and give them values that must needs be false. But those who live at elevations beyond the reach of these mists and fogs, see things in their true perspective. And hence the divergence of our mutual viewpoints. They tell us of the vast beautiful expanse where they dwell—free, unchristened, in eternal bliss. We on our part interpret them in the light of our own false values and false standards. We set our own Lilliputian tapes to these giants of manhood. And as a foregone conclusion, we fail to see eye to eye with them and, consequently, the conflict. It is something like the case of the frog and the fish in the fable. The fish, fresh from the sea into the little pond of the frog, would vainly try to give the latter an idea of the vast expanse of the sea. When asked one day by one of his friends if in his prayers, he ever entered the slightest idea of rija' (show), how apt was the illustration Mirza Ghulam Ahmad gave! "Would you be in any way prompted by a motive of show," he replied, "if you were to say your prayers in a zoo in the presence of all those birds and beasts, with no human being about?" Surely, none of us would care a fig for what a bear or an ass, a duck or a snake should think of us. Even so is it the case with these Great Souls. What is this world of ours but a big zoo? Though in human forms how many of us are there who can boast of having a right human vision of life? If Circe's wand were once more brought into operation, this time on us instead of Ulysses' gourmandizers, it would be interesting to see which particular shape each one of us takes—whether that of a wolf for our ferocity, or of a pig for our perversity, or of a peacock for our showy inclinations and so forth. These various passions are so many cages, so to speak, that keep us shut up within the animal plane. These Great Souls, however, break open every one of these cages and when thus free, they soar high up to the throne of Divine glory. How sweetly Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad sings of this spiritual Godward flight:

"Of that cage which is known as the world, out have I flown. My abode now is on the pinnacle of God's Throne of Glory."

Perhaps never in the course of recent history has there been a period more Godless than the 19th century, especially the latter half of it. It was a period when Western achievements in the domain of physical sciences and arts had dazzled the eyes of the world. Man was subjugating the forces of nature and what would have passed for a miracle in olden days, was in this scientific age a commonplace thing. Natural phenomena were now explained by physical causes without any room for some Higher Power. This new awakening of man in his own powers almost intoxicated him. He had no need for any such thing as God. He was the master of all he surveyed, he thought. In other words, it was a grossly materialistic and mechanical age, so far as the West was concerned. There was a mad headlong rush after material things. And in the hurry and bustle of this feverish busy life, the Voice of the High had virtually got drowned. The machine age had reduced man as well to just an automaton, divesting him of all vision of a higher life. It seemed as if the very idea of a Super-Being was clean out of man's mind. Under the influence of this matter-ridden machine age, there sprang up a literature and philosophy breathing the same spirit. With rare exceptions here and there which only proved the rule, there was a ring of atheism about all thought of the day. Materialism and atheism are twins. The one was bound to be followed by the other. This state of things went on at a great speed until only recently the Great War exposed the hollowness of this Godless civilization and cried a halt to it. People's eyes were for the first time opened to the grim fact that with God left out of the game of life, they were only working out their own destruction all the while. The East was faring no better. Whereas in the West, it was an age of restless activity, here in the East life was at its lowest ebb. What the West was before the Renaissance, somewhat the same the East was about this latter half of the 19th century. Ancient civilizations had decayed; mighty empires had crumbled and what was left of religion was empty ceremonialism, blind letter-worship. This was the case with all religions. The soul of religion had been lost. The form was all the people had. It was the darkest period in a Dark Age. God was as much out of man's heart in the East as in the West.

What about Islam, the youngest of all religions? Every whit the same. The original vision of the desert was lost. Instead, there had cropped up a big bundle of forms and formulas, rites and rituals, and trappings and underneath the sheer weight of these, all idea of a Living God had got completely crushed. A flowing beard, a long rosary, a longer robe, a huge turban—these formed the paraphernalia of a Godly person and whoever cared to wear them, was sure to pass for a pious and Godly person regardless of the inner beast in him. Daily prayers were also said but they were little better than parrot-like muttering and mumbling of certain words and going through a few gesticulations and movements. Salat (prayer) had ceased to be a man's Mi'raj, i.e., a means of atonement with God, as the Holy Prophet described it. Nor was it anything like the pure crystal stream of water, as the Prophet put it, in which a man took a dip and came out cleaner in mind and soul. It was just a thing
blind, automatic, mechanical. The Living God, the sole purpose and quest of prayer, was nowhere to be found there. Five times a day they would pray to God and fifty times a day they would pray on His creatures. To such depths had the real meaning of this all-important institution dwindled. The same was true of all other Islamic institutions. Fast was no longer meant as a means of spiritual purification and ultimate edification of man to a higher plane of life with the generality of Muslims; it was just starvation in obedience to no higher motive than the observance of a prevalent custom. The pilgrimage to Makka, instead of cultivating in the pilgrim a broad humanitarian outlook and impressing upon him the majesty of God, was just another mechanical process, considered like the atonement in Christianity to wash off all past sins. All his life a man would sow his wild oats and when he thought a large enough quantity of sin must have accumulated to his account, he would just take a trip to Makka to have it all struck off, at a single stroke. He came back, as he thought, with a clean slate. But this, instead of prompting him to turn a new page, put a premium on another free run of a low life.

The Qur'an likewise was, to the vast majority of Muslims, not the living word of a Living God but just a dead letter, having no place in work-a-day life. The only use for the Book was to produce it in a court of law to take a false oath upon or to find out such

charms and incantations as might reveal hidden treasures, or win the heart of the beloved, or again to take omens from. All the pearls of deep wisdom embedded in its pages, with potency to infuse life into dead bones as they actually did in the Prophet's day, were little better to them than so many empty shells. It never struck them that after all, it was a code of life and a Muslim must take no step in this rough and tumble of life but in the light of this code. Not did it occur to anyone that nowhere could a spark of real life be found except in the pages of the Holy Qur'an.

The Word of God which was supposed to "take out of darkness into light" was absolutely shelved off, so far as practical life was concerned. The reason is not far to seek. There was no living faith in a living God. There was lip-reverence for the Book but that was due to blind custom. In the scheme of life, the Qur'an nowhere came in. For this, resort was had to other sources. There were two such sources—the *Mulla* and the *Pir*. Like the Christian clergymen of medieval Europe or the Brahman of India, the Mulla had usurped to himself all authority of interpretation of the Qur'an. A layman dared not open it with a view to understanding it. This was considered a sacrilege. *Ghair muqalild* (i.e., not binding himself by ecclesiastical authority) was an epithet almost synonymous with infidel. Religion, according to the Mulla, was that which had the hallmark of his conventional authorities. And what did it amount to? To a practical negation of the Qur'an. Instead of the Book of God, there were set up "authorities" in the form of this man or that. The door of the Divine Word was banged against all. Light and guidance must be sought, if at all, through those stereotyped channels of the *Mulla*. This meant the dethronement of God from the seat of authority and the installation of the Mulla on the pedestal of Divinity.

There was, however, yet another usurper of the throne of God. It was the *Pir*. If you wanted a moral or spiritual lesson, the *Pir* would have you knock at his door. He was the custodian of the spiritual secrets of Islam which he claimed to have inherited through a long chain of *Pirs* and sub-*Pirs*. It was a hidden treasure, not open to the profane eye of the uninstructed. It came down from bosom to bosom. The *Pir* 's own bosom was the living repository of that treasure and if you wanted a "share" of that, you must formally enter the band of his disciples. If you wanted more of that "share," you must approach the *Pir* with more *nazra* (cash present). That was the quickest and the surest way of finding God. The Qur'an was of little account. I remember having once had a talk with one such *Pir*. When I told him of a certain man being a really Godly man, he sharply asked: Well what school of *Tariqat* (spiritual instruction) does he belong to? I replied

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such persons have declared their Divine appointment as *mujaddids*. Again, is there any person, other than *Hadrat Ahmad*, who has at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century *hijrah* done such yeoman's service to the cause of Islam? Service to Islam does not mean the publication of a few books and stirring up the Muslims for some mundane or political cause. The real point is, who was the person who staked his all for the glory of Islam in its grievous struggle against other religions? Who was the person who shielded Islam against the assaults of all other hostile forces? Who placed before the world the beautiful picture of Islam? Who stirred up the religious consciousness of the general body of Muslims and created such a strong movement among his followers that they became the torch-bearers of Islam to different nations of the world? And above all, who gave the message of hope to the tottering world of today?

On the one hand, nobody has claimed to be the God-sent renovator (*mujaddid*) of this age; on the other no one else has done so much for the cause of Islam as compared with Hadrat Ahmad. Thus, he is alone in his claim as well as in his work. In these circumstances, anybody who rejects him, in fact, rejects the clear saying of the Prophet Muhammad that: *most surely Allah will raise for this ummah at the head of every century one who will bring about the revival of their religion.*

Notes

1. *Ayyam-al-Sulh*, p. 163.
2. *Izala Asham*, p. 553.
4. See the comment on Qur'an 40:15 in *Ruh al-Ma'ani* (Cairo).
6. Ibid., 20:38.
8. Ibid., 5–111. Detailed discussion on this subject will be found in Muhammad Ali's *The Finality of Prophethood* (ch. 2 and 3), published by the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, England, 1966.
10. Ibid., 10:64.
14. [The text of this note is printed on p. 20 as "The Mujaddids and Their Claims."—Ed.]
15. *Isha'at-al-Sunnah*, vol. 7, June–November 1884 C.E., edited by the Maulawi Muhammad Husain of Batala, a leader of the Ahl Hadith.
Promised Messiah – The Man

Before we proceed to understand more of the message of life which Mirza Ghulam Ahmad brought, it would be worth while to know something about the man himself. For what is the message that a great man brings but the music that vibrates the whole of his being? Let us therefore have a peep into the innermost heart of this Great Soul, if we would thoroughly enjoy the heavenly strains that flowed from it.

Unfortunately, of the early childhood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, we are not in possession of many details. He was born in 1839 at a country place, Qadian, some seventy miles from Lahore. He came of a good old stock of Central Asia and was the scion of a dynasty which originally belonged to Persia. As such he was one of the “sons of Persia” as was foretold by the Holy Prophet. It was in the reign of Babar, sometime about the year 1530 C.E., that his family migrated to India. They were granted a large estate in the fertile plains of the Punjab and they settled at the place where now stands the modern Qadian. They called it Islamabad, which shows the religious trend of the family. In the countryside round about, the place was known as Islamabad Qazi, for here dwelt the Qazi (Head) of the estate.

And by a gradual process of contraction and corruption it assumed the present shape—Qadian. Anyway, the family lived here in power and plenty as the ruling family. The advent of the Sikh rule in the Punjab, however, spelt to them a hard turn of fortune. Their power was crushed and they were driven out of their estate. The rule of Ranjit Singh brought them some measure of relief. On the representation of Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, father of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the house was restored to its ancestral home at Qadian, though not to its former glory. The once big estate shrank into just five petty villages.

Mirza Ghulam Mustafa was ever haunted by the vision of the lost power of his house. Though now in comparative comfort, of real peace of heart, he had none. With the death of Ranjit Singh which synchronized with the birth of our hero, began the disruption of Sikh power. At the advent of British rule Mirza Ghulam Murtaza tried his luck once more and he underwent a lot of worry and expense to win back the rest of his ancestral estate. But this was a fond hope. He would incessantly brood over these disappointments and this went a long way to mold at that tender age, the trend of his young son, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s mind. It impressed upon him the transient character of worldly glory and the hollowness of worldly ambitions. Of this, he himself tells us in a note on his early life: “On account of these disappointments, my father would ever keep in a deep whirlpool of care and worries. This made a deep impression on me and transformed the whole of my outlook on life. The bitter experiences of my father had for me the message of a life free from all alloy of worldliness.”

At the age of six, the would-be Mujaddid was put in charge of a private tutor who gave him coaching in the Holy Qur’an and the Persian language. There were no regular schools in those days and only nobility cared to educate their children by such special arrangements. At ten, an Arabic scholar was engaged to teach him Arabic. From him he learnt a few books in Arabic grammar. At the age of seventeen, a third teacher was employed who gave him lessons in Arabic syntax, in logic and in medicine. It is said that unlike other boys of his family who were put under the same teacher, he was ever engrossed in his studies. The frivolities characteristic of that age were not after his heart. Gifted with a contemplative bent of mind, he loved solitude and books.

Mirza Ghulam Murtaza wanted his son to grow up to the best traditions of his family—a man of the world bent on making a mark in life. So he put him in his own line of work which consisted mainly in looking after the agricultural interests of the family and knocking about the courts in the vain pursuit of regaining the lost estate. Now this was a work utterly foreign to the nature of the young Mirza whom Providence had designed for higher things. He was no good at this sort of job and his father, disappointed in him, would often scold him as a hopeless fellow. Nevertheless, in obedience to the wishes of his father he would do all he could to attend to the affairs entrusted to him. During this period he had to undertake long and weary journeys mostly on foot to follow up lawsuits in courts. His trips in this connection to the hill courts at Dalhousie however were not absolutely devoid of interest. He loved to tread the lonely tracks, up and down hills and dales, musing and chanting within himself on the beauties of nature, in accompaniment to the nodding trees and the murmuring streams. In older days he would often talk of those pleasant moments. “Whenever I happened to make a journey to Dalhousie, my heart would spontaneously gush forth with glorification of the Lord at the sight of vast tracts of rich verdure and flowing springs of water. I thoroughly enjoyed those solitudes, and would find my prayers particularly sweet.”

Litigation, however, was not in the line of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and as was only to be expected, he was not much of a success at it. His father thought of trying another field—the opportunities of Government service. At the age of 25, in 1864, he was made to accept a job in Government service at Sialkot. This brings us to what is known as the Sialkot period of his life. Here he went through the most momentous experience of his life, the transitional stage. Here he came in contact with men and matters. This sphere of life in which the hand of Providence placed him, as if with a purpose to try his mettle and bring him out as a seasoned gold from the crucible, was full of corruption. He saw the seamy side of human life and the filth and dirt in which so many human beings were wallowing. Like a duck in the water, however, he never mixed with these men. On the other hand, he gave himself up all the more to solitude and meditation, and later on when he visited this town in 1904, as the Messiah, it was with no small amount of pride that he recalled his early life here. Addressing a public meeting, he said: “I am the self-same man who lived here in your city a number of years. But how many of you then knew me? I lived in obscurity but those were the sweetest days of my life. For though in society, I was yet in solitude, though in the midst of many, I was yet alone, though in a crowded town, I yet passed my days as if I lived in a desert.”
The Dawn

Is not God sufficient unto His servant?

In this narrative of the Great Soul of our age I have but one purpose before my eyes. I want the reader to grasp, not so much what Mirza Ghulam Ahmad said or did, but what he was. For, what a man is, that he says and does. If I have to refer to his words and deeds, I do so insofar as they throw light on the inner Man within him. It is, to my mind, in this, that lies the meaning and value to us, of any great man. If we are to understand and appraise the worth of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad we are liable to be misled, unless we lay our hands right on the Man himself, unless we take a plunge down into the depths of his very soul and watch its inner working at close quarters or unless we soar up with him to those heights from which he looked down on the world, its why and its wherefore.

A glimpse of the Mirza’s mind as we have had so far, leaves us in no doubt as to the dominant note of his personality. He was out to hit upon some sure solution of the riddle of life. Appearances could not deceive or hoodwink him. He must penetrate the veil and lay hold on the Reality behind it. Such was the cast of his mind and from very early days could be seen in him the germs of a Master Mind. As years rolled by, that great passion took a firmer hold of his head and heart. His Sialkot life was characterized by the same detachment from earthly connections, the same longing to pierce through the all-enveloping darkness. Things went on like this till we reach a period somewhere in the seventies of the last century. This was for him a stage of intense groping for light.

Seekers after Divine light tell us that before that light comes in full blaze, they witness what might be compared to twilight on the distant horizon. In this twilight, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad lived ever since his Sialkot days. The spiritual experience known as vision is something like seeing things in such light and this must, at best, mean a hazy, vague, dim perception. Of these

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 solución de la vida. Las apariencias no podían engañarlo ni engañarlo. Él debía penetrar el velo y agarrar la Realidad detrás de ello. Así era la estructura de su mente y desde muy temprano se podía ver en él los germenes de una Grandeza Mental. Con los años, esta gran pasión tomó una firmeza más en su cabeza y corazón. Su vida en Sialkot fue caracterizada por el mismo desprendimiento de las conexiones terrenales, el mismo ansia de romper a través del envolvimiento total. Las cosas continuaron de esta manera hasta la década de 1970. Para él, esto fue un período de intensa búsqueda de la luz.

Los buscadores de la Divina luz nos dicen que antes que la luz llegue en pleno fulgor, ellos pueden experimentar lo que se podría comparar con la tarde en el horizonte distante. En este tardar, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad vivió desde sus días en Sialkot. La experiencia espiritual conocida como visión es algo similar a ver cosas en este tipo de luz y esto debe, al mejor de la cuenta, significar una percepción vaga, confusa, confusa. De estas
Promised Messiah – The Philosopher

Let not the reader mistake Mirza Ghulam Ahmad for a stereotyped theologian with narrow mental grooves stuffed with a few conventional books, nor for a self-centered idle visionary, knowing or caring to know little about contemporary thought. He will certainly miss the man clean if he takes him for one or the other. One has only to refer to his works such as Barhini-Ahmadiyya—a deep rationalistic discourse in as many as four volumes—and Aina-i-Kalimat-i Islami, to class him so far as critical research goes, with men like Spencer, Kant, Berkeley and Nietzsche, with this difference, that whereas these latter had only the eye of reason with which to explore the regions of thought, the Mirza had the advantage of having his light of reason supplemented by the light of revelation. Those who are accustomed to look upon reason and religion as two distinct things which may even run counter to each other may be surprised at this. But such was not the Mirza’s view of religion. He gave a beautiful illustration of the interrelation between reason and revelation. He compared the latter to a microscope to the eye of reason. Just as the naked physical eye is limited in its vision to things up to a certain degree of magnitude, so is the naked eye of reason. But if you want to see minute things, you must call the microscope to its aid. Even so is the nature of the function of revelation with respect to the eye of reason. The one supplements the other.

In the preceding [section] I have shown how the Mirza was furnished with this microscope of Divine revelation and ever since he used it with distinct advantage in his criticism of all contemporary thought and in the exposition of the spiritual laws governing the life of man. He had made a grand discovery. He had found God. But it was only the God of the Qur’an that existed. All other gods were only the “big brother” of the Mumbo Jumbo of the primitive man. No other spiritual explanation of this Universe, he proclaimed, was in consonance with reason except that given in the Qur’an. This was not mere credulity. It was an enlightened conviction, the mature result of a thorough survey of all the existing religions of the world. This naturally drew him into the field of controversy, at which he displayed considerable force and acumen. And as the last word on comparative religion, he compiled his famous work, Barahini-Ahmadiyya, dealing with every existing shade of thought in the field of religion—from Hinduism in all its offshoots (Arya Samaj, Brahm Samaj, Dev Samaj and so forth) to Christianity, and down to atheism. The work may rightly be called the Encyclopedia of Religion.

The publication of this book created a stir in religious circles and brought
Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad
Promised Messiah and Mahdi
Mujaddid of the Fourteenth Century A.H.
Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to a position of prominence in the world of religious thought. The Muslims acclaimed him as the greatest servant of Islam. To give the reader an idea of the deep appreciation which his work won, I cannot do better than reproduce in brief the tribute which a leading theologian of the day, Maulvi Muhammad Hussain of Batala, who subsequently became the leader of Opposition against him, paid to it. He devoted as many as 125 pages in several issues of his magazine, Isba' at-us-Sunnah (June to November 1884) to a review of this book. He winds up this lengthy review with the observation:

“...This is the summary of the book. Now we would express our estimate of it in brief and in unexaggerated terms. In our opinion, this book, in view of the present age and the present conditions, is such that the like of it has never so far been published in the history of Islam and as for the future, we can say nothing. Its author has also displayed such steadfastness in helping forward the cause of Islam with money, with personal labour, with pen and tongue, that a parallel of it is rarely met with among the past Muslims. If someone should consider these comments of ours as Eastern exaggeration, let him produce at least one such book in which Islam has been so forcibly defended against all hostile critics, especially against the Arya and Brahmo sects of Hinduism. And over and above this, let him point to just a few of such persons who may have undertaken besides these manifold services, to furnish proof of the spiritual fruits of Islam and have so manfully thrown out to all opponents of Islam and disbelievers in the fact of Divine revelation the challenge: ‘Whoever doubts the fact of revelation, let him come to me and have a personal observation of the truth of this spiritual experience.’”

It is no place to go into details. It is a pity the numerous admirers of the Mirza have so far done nothing to introduce the outside world to these beautiful writings of the Great Man. The wealth of thought contained in the pages of at least the Barahin and the Kamalat should by now have been made accessible to the Western reader. The East is unfortunately far too behind in its modes of thought to appreciate the scientific exposition of Islamic truths contained in these books. The Mirza’s high philosophy, so strikingly in keeping with the scientifc spirit of the West, is sure, if properly presented, to revolutionize the entire range of Western thought in the domain of science and philosophy. Besides, no one can understand either the man or his message but through these books. It is not enough to tell the people that a Messiah was foretold to appear in these latter days or to marshal quotations after quotations from the Qur’an and the Hadith in support of it. People must see the Messiah as he was. The Messiah must be his own argument. And the Barahin and the Kamalat constitute two mirrors which reveal the lofty soul of their illustrious author.

But to give the reader just a sample of the pearls of thought in these books, for the first time in the history of religion, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad postulated, of course, from the Qur’an that the laws and teachings of a revealed religion must not conflict with the laws of physical nature, inasmuch as the one is the Word of God and the other the Work of God. The laws emanating from one and the same source must not be contradictory. That is why the Qur’an, when it wants to explain some abstract spiritual truth, calls attention to some concrete phenomenon of Nature. This is like explaining the unknown by the known. Under this general principle the Mirza, in the course of his exposition, has thrown light on some very subtle questions, e.g., the existence of God and the fact of Divine revelation. He takes some such line of argument: In the whole realm of physical nature there appears at work a law that may be called the law of demand and supply. There is no demand anywhere but without fail, there is corresponding to it supply as well somewhere in Nature. Hunger and thirst are the two primary demands of man’s nature. The needful supply is there in the shape of food and water. Even before man’s birth Nature ensures the requisite supply and fills the mother’s breast with milk. Man wants to see with his eyes but this cannot be done without light. So comes the supply of light. The ear must hear and this creates a demand for something to bring sounds. That something is provided in the form of air. Generalizing from these natural phenomena, the Mirza asks: Is not there a deep yearning in the innermost heart of man after some Great Unseen Power to exist behind all this universe? If the yearning is there, the supply to satisfy that yearning must also be there. Two things therefore follow. Firstly, the Great Unseen Power must be there. Secondly, He must make Himself known to man. The next question that arises is, How is it possible for man to know God? By mere reason? No, he says. The highest flight of reason is, There ought to be a God. But ought to be would not do. For a thirsty man, it is no use telling him that somewhere on earth, there ought to be water. That would not satisfy his thirst. Ought to be is not the supply. Here is water—that is what he wants and that is what alone can quench his thirst. Likewise, a mere there-ought-to-be—a-God cannot quench man’s spiritual thirst. The demand wants something more—that there is a God. Now, how is it possible to bridge this gulf between the ought-to-be of the philosopher and the is that the thirsty-of-spirit wants? In one and only one way—viz., that God should actually speak to man. Speech alone can remove all uncertainty and transform the philosopher’s probable into the saint’s actual. Hence the fact of God speaking to man.

The parallelism between the Word of God, the Holy Qur’an and the Work of God, Nature, is so beautifully brought out at great length in the Barahin. The very first attributes of God with which this Book of God opens are shown to be every inch the same we find at work in the book of Nature. A cursory glance at Nature around us reveals four laws universally at work. Firstly, everything is created with a set purpose. By a gradual process of evolution it attains to its appointed end. Take, for instance, a tiny seedling. The ideal before the seedling is some day to grow into a big tree. The process of its growth and development is marked by definite stages through which it must pass. This is the primary law regulating the life of everything in Nature, i.e., evolution from the lowest to the highest point along a set, fixed route. This primary law of Nature forms the fundamental attribute of the God of the Qur’an, viz., Rab. This word Rab literally means one who brings a thing up, step by step, from the lowest to the highest stage. The whole of Nature proclaims the working of the attributes of Rab. Rab alone therefore could be the God of man, who is part and parcel of the same Nature. And most appropriately the Qur’an depicts Him, first and foremost, as Rab. Again, it is a common continued on page 13
Promised Messiah – The Message

When such a person comes, the spring comes back:
Back comes the season of flowers.
The hour of the Beloved’s sight comes back;
Back comes peace to the lover’s heart.
The bright-faced Beloved comes back:
Back comes the sun to noon-tide.
Again the flowers smile sweet;
The nightingales sing in joy again.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad said and did many a thing in his lifetime. He turned out heaps of literature and this of the most uplifting character. He compiled as many as eighty volumes, in addition to hundreds of pamphlets and tracts and thousands of handbills. He addressed huge public gatherings. He entered into heated controversies. But in this big mass of things, let us not lose sight of the man himself, the one supreme purpose running all through his manifold activities, the grand mission and message of his life. Let us not lose the wood in the trees. This would be repeating the very blunder he came expressly to rectify.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s life-mission may be summed up in one sentence—restoration of the soul of man. This has been the sole object of every religion. This was the one mission of Islam. As shown in a previous section, at his advent, the Mirza found man running after all sorts of things with never a thought for the great thing within him. Somewhere he was in mad pursuit after things of the matter which seemed to him the be-all and end-all of life. Somewhere he was rotting in the chains of custom, convention, man-worship, letter-worship and so forth. Nowhere was he himself. His own soul he had completely lost. Never for a moment would his eye turn from the appearance to the real, from the outside to inside. The little things of the earth and the false things had him to themselves, all in all. The Mirza came as a cry of halt to such a state of things. He was the soul of man in revolt against this soulless state of life. Within you, he shouted, lies the greatest of all things. Rediscover that and all the rest shall be added unto you.

It was to the life of the spirit that the Mirza turned the eye of mankind. And in doing so had to do much of undoing. He had to cut asunder each and every chain that enslaved the soul of man. He overhauled the whole stock of man’s notions, the whole code of man’s standards. He gave a fresh interpretation to life. He reevaluated existing values. To begin with, at a single stroke, he exploded the atheistic and

The Philosopher . . . (Continued from page 12)

observation that the seedling would never see the light of day unless a number of other requirements are provided—viz., suitable soil, water, air, sunshine and so forth. The Qur’an represents this law of Nature by the attribute Rahman, which means one who supplies these preliminary requirements but for which no growth is possible. This done, further success of growth depends on how far the laws of horticulture are observed. If these are observed, the result is proper growth. If not, the seed must either get atrophied or the result must be stunted growth. These two laws form further two attributes of the God of the Qur’ān, viz., Rahim and Malik. Rahim is one who rewards effort on right lines. Malik is one who has the power to punish or pardon in case the proper laws of growth are not observed. No evolution of man is possible but along these lines. For his physical growth, for instance, he must want proper food. But food he cannot have ready-made. He must exert himself. In exertion lies the secret of his growth. He must grow his own food. This he cannot do unless air, rain, sunshine and so many other things which are beyond his control come to him as a free gift. Rahman makes a free supply of these; for the word means one who supplies such material without any effort on man’s part. When the material has been supplied, man must use his God-given powers to put it to right use. When he does so he gets the desired results. The power which ensures that effort must be plentifully rewarded is called Rahim. And to keep us to the right course of effort, we must be in no doubt as to the inevitability of results. Wrong effort must lead to undesirable fruit. The power which ensures this is known as Malik. Any process of evolution whether in Nature or in man proceeds along these fourfold lines. Thus the Qur’ānic God is the God we find manifested in Nature and hence the only true God.

It will be clear from the above that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was nothing of the credulous sort of man who is content with ideas merely hereditary, customary or conventional. He took things far too seriously to be so cheaply satisfied. He had the keen, discerning eye of the scientific critic of the day and weighed and judged the comparative values of the existing religions on their own merits. It was after thorough investigation that conviction as to the Divine origin of the Qur’an was forced upon him. It was not the conviction either of the over-credulous or of the self-satisfied. It was the enlightened conviction of critical scientific research that made him sing:

"My contemplation, I let go in every direction; but no faith like the faith of Muhammad did I find. In person did I test the truth of Islam. Listen! I say, it is light through and through."
agnostic tendencies of the age. “God is!” he said to a Godless world, “and He actually speaks to me.” This was the first and foremost item in his scheme of reformation. To establish this assertion, he gave irrefutable arguments which in themselves reveal the hand of a supernatural agency. Then, he pointed to his numerous prophecies which were published beforehand and came out marvelously true. But above all, the most convincing proof of his Divine mission was his own personality, his unblemished character, his lofty morals, his high vision, his deep philosophy. Like the philosopher’s stone, you had only to come into contact with him to be brought nearer to God. His calm serene face reflected the God within him and you wanted no more arguments to be convinced. Men of great learning, of great piety, of great position went to him and came back changed men. A look at his face was enough to make them oblivious to the world with all its attractions. Their base metal was transmuted into pure gold and mere contact with the Mirza transported them to the regions of the spirit. They spent the rest of their days at his feet. This is no fable. This is a hard fact. We read in the scriptures that Jesus restored the dead to life. Even so did this Messiah of Islam. At his breath, the blind of the spirit regained their vision, the lepers were healed and the dead sprang to life. Of this miraculous transformation the Messiah sang in such sweet strains:

Beth hee hoo Beni NanhAbstract

Behold! Divine light showers on this my house. But how at all can you see with eyes blind-folded.

“If ever you chance into the solitude of the pure one; There shall you see what light that closet contains.

“Those whom the shadow of the huma could do no good; Let them in my shadow stay a couple of days.

“The flower that never shall autumn see; In my garden is to be found if thy hand of luck can reach it.

Such wholesale transformation is no doubt not easy to understand, much less to appreciate, in this twentieth century. But a large band of earnest souls was actually thus metamorphosed. Their angle of vision on life underwent a radical change, so much so that to the average worldly-wise man, they appeared only a band of mad men. But with them it is a case of “Where madness is bliss it is folly to be wise.” And to put it in a couplet of the Messiah himself:

قَالَ الْمَلاَكُ لَنِعْمَىٰ عَلَىٰ هُوَ أَنتَ نَغْفِي

“Until I became mad, sense did not enter my head; Thank thee, O madness! what good thou hast done me.”

Surely, the world wants more of this madness—the realization of the fact that the world is not a haphazard routine-like affair and hence to be made the best of in the way of eat, drink and be merry, but that a moral and spiritual purpose pervades it. The Godless civilization of the West has failed. With banishing God it banished practically everything good and noble in the nature of man. Notwithstanding all its gloss and polish, it is rotten to the core. Selfishness and greed are the guiding principles in the most civilized council chambers. Men and men are no more brothers, children of the same God; they are like so many denizens of the forest, running at each other’s throats in a self-aggrandizing adventure. Germs of atheism which this materialistic culture has sown broadcast, are like so many dragon’s teeth out of which has sprung up a whole crop of monsters rushing down upon their own author. Surely, the world has had enough of this so-called wisdom. It is time we had more of that “madness” of the Messiah which places self-sacrifice above self-seeking, God above matter.

Thus the first thing the Messiah did was to emancipate the soul of man from the false rule of matter. Soul was above matter and must rise above it. God was the ideal of man—nothing short of God. But then there are God and Gods. Every people have a God of their own, with features of His own. Men’s superstitions have woven a web around God and God was, to all intents and purposes, more of a figment of man’s own imagination. To remove these webs was the next thing the Messiah addressed himself to. The God as depicted in the Qur’an was the only true God and the highest development of the soul of man was not possible but through modeling himself on the Qur’anic God. No other God answered the call of man. It was the God of Islam alone that did so and had actually answered his call, claimed the Mirza. A living, hearing God, if one exists, must reveal Himself to man. The God of Islam alone was such a God. He had revealed Himself to him. The Qur’an alone was at the present day the fountainhead of all spiritual light.

In coming into a living contact with a living God, according to the Messiah, lay the life of the soul. Higher life was possible only in the living presence of God. The God of the Qur’an alone was such a living God. Unfortunately, the hand of man had woven a heavy web around His as well. Therefore, the Messiah, when he pulled down all man-made deities that only served to ensnare the soul of man, set about purging the conception of God of all human alloy. As observed before, Muslims as well were a chip of the same block. Here too, God existed only in name. It was a dead God that they worshipped and His throne had been usurped by the Mulla and the Pir. The Qur’an, no doubt, was the only repository of Heavenly light. But then, the Islam of the Qur’an and the Islam of the Muslim were poles asunder. People took their notions not from the source (the Qur’an) direct but from the two intermediaries above-mentioned. The Messiah was thus constrained to cross swords with these as well, and strip them of their false Divine feathers. He had to emancipate the Muslim from slavery to man like himself. He dealt a death blow to the institutions of the Pir system and priesthood which alone, more than anything else, have been the bane of Muslim society. The Qur’an was the only guide for a Muslim—the only authority; he declared the only fountain of spirituality from which anybody and everybody could drink direct. Naturally, the battle that ensued was bitter. On the one hand, the vested interests of those two classes were at stake. On the other, the dupes of these demi-gods clung to their long-seated prejudices and superstitions.
He Came to a Godless World... (Continued from page 7)

that he belonged to none of his so-called schools of spirituality, and had imbibed all his spirituality from the fountainhead of all Godliness, the Holy Qur’an. He turned round on me in a fit of fanaticism raging, saying, “How dare you talk such blasphemy? Spirituality without being formally linked up to one or other of the silsilas (schools of spirituality)? Nonsense!”

“Yes,” I replied, “it is of such as you that the Holy Prophet complained long since: O Lord! My people have deserted this Qur’an altogether.” And what in fact does this frame of mind mean, save that the Holy Qur’an is to all intents and purposes a dead letter?

Such was the condition of the general masses of Islam. With the Mulla on one side and the Pir on the other, they were between the devil and the deep sea. There was no way out of it. The living, dragging Word of God was to them a forbidden fruit. Direct approach to God was an impossibility. To think of it was a profanity. There were only two gateways to God and the keys of these lay in the hands of these two monsters. Such was the slavery mentality of the average Muslim. God was nowhere to be met within his mental make-up. It was either the Mulla or the Pir that held undisputed sway over his head as well as heart.

There was, however, yet another class of people which, though enlightened, was hardly more Godly. This was the small class of the “intellectuals,” educated and brought up under the influence of Western culture—known as man of “new light,” the school known as the Aligarh Movement. This was a revivalist movement and did, no doubt, a great good to the general awakening of the Indian Muslims. But its inspiration was purely Western and hence the lines on which it developed were essentially Western. It was an imitation copy of the West and its attitude towards the Western sciences was one of awe and reverence. It stood with its mouth wide agape at the miracles wrought by Western sciences and arts. Its fancy was wholly taken up with these and the mechanical civilization of the West seemed to it the be-all and end-all of life. And as was only to be expected, the movement could not but imbibe the atheistic trend of Western thought. Agnosticism, skepticism, atheism found their way into the young blood of the community. The danger was realized and attempts were made to find an antidote to the poison. But the antidote was little better than the poison itself. The attitude adopted was timidly apologetic and attempts were made to harmonize Islamic truths with the scientific and philosophical thought of the day and this, unconsciously, spilled the suicide of Islam. This new interpretation of life, like its prototype of the West, sought to explain things on a purely physical plane. In other words, it amounted to the banishment of God from human affairs.

It was to such a world that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad came with his message—a world Godless to the very core. The West stuck in materialism, the East steeped in formalism and mechanicalism, God nowhere in the hearts of men! Yes, to such a world came he with his message from on High. God is, he proclaimed, God lives, as He did in the days of yore. God hears our prayers, God answers our prayers. God speaks as he spoke of old. In God alone lay all the happiness of man. A living faith in a living God was the only panacea of all our ills and ailments, the only secret of success in life and the only key to Heaven in the hereafter. And what could be a more appropriate message to a humanity so bereft of the last flicker of faith? It was of this message that the Holy Prophet spoke when he said that he could scent a fragrant breeze blowing from the side of India. It was to this high vision, this living faith that the Holy Prophet referred when he said:

لَو كان الإسلام معلقا بالتراب

لنزل رجل من ابناء الغارس

(بيخاري)

“Even if faith be gone up to the Pleiades a man from amongst the sons of Persia will restore it” — Bukhari.
Promised Messiah – The Personality

I live by the word of God that comes to me; His message is to me as the food of soul.

It was no small opposition that the Messiah was confronted with. He was out to establish Truth and of necessity he had to destroy all that was in the way of Truth. This brought him into conflict with the Arya Samaj and the Christian Church. The controversies between him and the founder of the Samaj, Swami Daya Nand, were bitter and heated. And so were those with the Church. He refuted the very basic doctrines of these and other religions and thus made enemies on all sides. Among the Muslims, however, he commanded considerable popularity for his learning and devotion to Islam. With the publication of the Barahin in 1880, his popularity amongst the Muslims reached its zenith. And in 1889 (March 4) when he announced his Divine commission as the Muijaddid of the 14th century, his claim was universally acclaimed by Muslims. The general impression was that he was the right man in the right place. Never was he known to have told a lie all his life. His career was one perpetual devotion to the service of Islam. And as a scholar of religion, he had already made a mark. He was enthusiastically acclaimed as a Muijaddid. But only two years later in 1891, when he claimed to be the Messiah foretold in the Hadith, these friends also turned into enemies. But he could not help it. Friends or no friends, he was out to do as he was bid. Popularity was not in his line. He was the servant of God. He could lose his popularity, his friends, but not his Master.

The opposition from the Mullas and the Pir was the bitterest of all. For they had much to lose. So far they were the demi-gods of the masses. They were not going to part with that power without striking a blow. They threw all sorts of mud on him, in the press and from the platform. No day passed but the mail brought him letters full of vituperation and of these he had a whole box filled in a short time. But this caused not so much as a ripple on the serenity of his mind. This was meant, he would say, to give him some spiritual exercise as the long fasts that he had been keeping were meant for subjugation of his physical nature.

Several times he was dragged into court to involve him into trouble. Once he unwittingly enclosed a letter in a book-packet, a thing against postal rules. Even such a small opportunity was seized upon by his enemies to get up a case against him. His counsel advised him that the only way to escape the clutches of the law was to deny the charge. But “no” was the prompt reply. He would rather be disgraced in the eye of man by being punished than in the eye of God by telling a lie. He told the plain truth and was acquitted. He was universally noted for his truthfulness and even his enemies were convinced of it. In a lawsuit against his son the plaintiffs summoned him as a witness, trusting he would say nothing but truth. And he gave evidence against his son.

Once a united attempt was made by all his opponents to bring a case of abetment of murder against him. This was in connection with his prophecy about a Christian missionary who was a habitual vitilifier of the Holy Prophet, that if he persisted in his vilification he would meet with a violent death at the

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No Claim to Prophethood

By MAULANA MUHAMMAD ALI, M.A., L.I.B.

[After the death of the Promised Messiah, a large section of his followers, led by his son Mirza Basheer-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, who had no Divine authority and whose sole object was to establish a form of hereditary priest-craft, adopted the doctrine that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was in fact a claimant to prophethood. Charges of such a claim had also been made by his opponents during his lifetime, and recently (in 1974) the then National Assembly of Pakistan adopted a bill amending the Constitution of Pakistan and declaring the Promised Messiah and his followers "a non-Muslim minority for the purposes of the constitution and law." The charge of laying claim to prophethood made against the Promised Messiah is not only baseless but amounts to fabricating lies against him, of which a large number of his followers as well as opponents have been equally guilty. —Ed.]

Let us see how [the Promised Messiah] treated this charge of laying a claim to prophethood:

"And we also curse the claimant to prophethood."1

"After our lord and master Muhammed Mustapa (may peace and blessings of God be upon him—the last of the Messengers, khatam al-mursalin)—I regard any claimant to prophethood and messengership to be a liar and an unbeliever (kafir)."2

"I look upon anyone who denies the finality of prophethood to be a heretic and outside the pale of Islam."3

"And it does not behove me that I should lay a claim to prophethood and go outside the pale of Islam and join the party of unbelievers."4

"Can an ill-fated fabricator who himself lays claim to messengership and prophethood have any faith in the Qur'an."5

"These people have forged a lie against me who say that I have laid a claim to prophethood."6

The charge of prophethood is, of course, a calumny against Mirza Ghulam Ahmad whether it comes from the side of his friends or foes. His own career is, however, free from such blasphemies:

without a code. I quote below a few references to substantiate my point:

"There is no claim of prophethood but of muhaddathiyah which has been made by the command of Allah."8

"From the beginning my intention has been that the word prophet does not mean a real (haqiqi) prophet but only a muhaddath who according to the Holy Prophet is a recipient of Divine communication."9

"I firmly believe that our Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is khatam al-anbiya (Seal of the prophets) and after him no prophet, neither new nor old, shall appear for this ummah... Of course, muhaddathin will be raised who are communicated with by God Almighty."10

"I am not a prophet but a muhaddath from God and a recipient of Divine communication so that I may renovate the religion of Mustafa."11

"Neither did I lay claim to prophethood, nor did I say to them that I was a prophet. But these people made haste and misunderstood me in my statement... I have told the people nothing except that which I had written in my books that I was a muhaddath and God communicated with me as He did with other muhaddathin."12

"These people did not understand me and said that this person was a claimant to prophethood and God knows that this saying of theirs was quite baseless... I said it is true that muhaddath contained all elements of prophethood in him in a potential form and not in point of position and if the door of prophethood has not been closed he would have been a prophet in position as well."13

"I lay no claim to prophethood. This is only your mistake or are you saying it with some other motive? Does a person also become a prophet if he claims to be the recipient of ilham (inspiration)."14

"Our master the Messenger of Allah is khatam al-anbiya (the Seal of the prophets) and as no prophet can appear after him, therefore in this Shari'ah, muhaddathin have been substituted for prophets."15

The assertion, therefore, that while denying prophethood the Founder had in view only the denial of prophethood
with a code, and not prophethood without a code, is baseless, because wherever he has repudiated the charge of prophethood against him he has not, as opposed to this, declared that he has laid a claim to a prophethood without a code. On the contrary he has stated that he was a claimant to muc

haddathiyah which shows that to him nubuwwah was different from muc

haddathiyah. And whenever he denied claim to prophethood, he denied the claim to absolute prophethood (mulaq nubuwwah), i.e., prophethood to which this word could be applied in the terminology of Shari'ah. Thus, if prophethood without a code is not muc

haddathiyah and means a special kind of prophethood, then its denial was also present in the mind of the Founder along with the denial of prophethood with a code. He has cursed the claimants of both these kinds (of prophethood) and has denounced them as infidels outside the circle of Islam.

The Anathema of Heresy (Fatwa Kufr) was based on the claim of prophethood without a code

Had this clarification not been found in his writings even then such a thought—that, by the denial of prophethood, only a denial of prophethood with a code was implied—would have been unjustifiable. The Fatwa of Kufr (Anathema of Heresy) leveled against him was not based on his claim of prophethood with a code (tashri' nubuwwat), but on the alleged basis of his claim to prophethood without a code (ghair tashri' nubuwwat) as has been clearly mentioned in the Fatwa. It is evident now that his strong denial concerning prophethood came after the publication of the Fatwa which accused him of laying a claim to prophethood without a code. When a person is accused of something, he must necessarily clarify his position with particular reference to that point. It is meaningless to clear oneself from a charge which has not been actually laid against one. The opponents admitted it themselves that the Founder was not a claimant to prophethood with a code but that he claimed to be a prophet without a code, and it was for this reason that he should be declared a heretic. Did Hadrat Ahmad tell them in reply that his opponents were liars and that he did not lay a claim to prophethood with a code but to prophethood without a code? If he had written thus, he would have indeed confirmed the allegation of his opponents. The following are the words of the Fatwa Kufr (pp. 76–77):

"The Qadiani's view about the finality of prophethood which limits itself to complete prophethood or prophethood with a code and his assertion of being a muhaddath, thereby proposing for himself a special kind of prophethood, clearly shows that he regards himself like the prophets of the Israelites (who did not bring new code but followed the previous ones and were called prophets). This is implied in his verses of Qasidah Ilhamiyah:"

If there had been no such clarification in the Fatwa Kufr and simply a charge of being a prophet was laid against the Founder, the denial of such a charge by him must have included all types of prophethood, whether it was a new prophethood with a code or without. Unless he had admitted it himself that his denial was only directed against a prophethood with a code and not against prophethood without, nobody else had any right to say that, while refuting the charge of a claim to prophethood, he had in view prophethood pertaining to a code. Moreover, when his opponents made it clear that the point at issue was not prophethood with a code but prophethood without a code, the Founder's refusal to admit such a charge could not mean anything else except the denial of prophethood without a code.

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hands of an assassin. This gave his enemies an opportunity to involve him. A scamp was hired to hang about the missionary's house in suspicious circumstances and then give himself up as having been deputed by the Mirza to do the black deed. The whole thing was cleverly got up. It was a most serious case, but never for a moment was the Mirza's tranquility perturbed on that account. Christian missionaries wielded tremendous influence with the Government in those days and the influence was used to the utmost against the Mirza. Whom God, however, would preserve no man can injure. The court saw through the whole game. The plot was discovered and he was acquitted.

The one dominant trait of his personality was his ever-green faith in God. It seemed as if he lived, breathed and had his being in God. His face ever radiated calm and content which is the fruit of such a living faith. This serenity of mind had become a second nature with him. When his young son playfully burnt to ashes a manuscript which he had taken much pains to prepare, there was on his face not the faintest ripple of displeasure when he saw it. Cheerful as usual, he simply smiled, saying that perhaps God would give him better thoughts to write another. When Mubarak, one of his sons who was very dear to him, died, he simply said: "He who has sent for Mubarak is the dearest of all." When a maidservant of the family pinched some rice he, rather than scold her, said: "Poor woman! She must be wanting it. Let her have more." Such imperturbable composure and deep human sympathy was due to that one thing, ever-living sense of God. Such-like incidents, though insignificant to look at, are a true index to the dominant note of a man's being. Living faith in a living God, a faith which knew no wavering and which kept him ever drunk with the love of God—this was the keynote of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's personality. This was the sole panacea which he prescribed for all the ills of humanity.

Did he not know the difference between a nabi and a muhaddath?

According to him the following conditions were found in a muhaddath:

1. Muhaddath is spoken to by God.
2. He is commissioned just like prophets.
3. Like prophets it is obligatory on him that he should announce himself at the top of his voice.
4. Anybody who rejects him deserves punishment to some extent.

That non-prophets are endowed with Divine communication is an established principle of the Islamic Shari'ah. The Qur'an has itself spoken of the sending of Divine revelation to Moses' mother:

وصبَعَنَّهَا إِلَى أُمَّ مُوسَى

"And We revealed to Moses' mother,"16 Similarly a mention has been made of Jesus' disciples receiving revelation:
"and when I revealed to the disciples."17 Neither Moses’ mother nor the disciples of Jesus were prophets but they were certainly favored with the gift of revelation. Some persons are alarmed at the use of the word revelation (wahy) and think that a righteous servant of God (auliya’ Allah) can have inspiration (ilham) but not wahy whereas the Qur’an has clearly used the word wahy in the above instances for non-prophets.

The second point is his being commissioned as a mamur (the one Divinely raised). The words of the Hadith about mujaddid are a clear evidence to this effect:

أَنَّ اللَّهَ رَاحِطًا لِلنَّاسِ وَلَيْسَ كَأَيْضًا عَلَى سُورَةٍ مِنْ تَحْكِيمٍ وَكُلُّ إِمَامٍ مَعْلُوِمٌ نَظَرًا

"Most surely Allah will raise for this nation at the head of every century one who shall revive for it its faith."

Here the word yab’athu (He will raise or appoint) has been spoken about the mujaddid which refers to his being a mamur (Divinely ordained), and his declaring himself as such is obviously the result of his appointment. When God would raise him to the status of a mamur he would naturally declare himself to be so. As to the last point, that anyone who opposes him deserves punishment to some extent, it is evident that when God appoints a person his denial is the denial of a command of God. As the rejection of every Divine command makes a person liable to punishment, the rejection of a mujaddid too is open to some punishment.18

The distinguishing characteristics between a nabi and a mubahaddath

"I have written in some of my books that the office of iahdith closely resembles the office of prophethood and there is no difference between them except in potentiality and actuality. But these people did not understand my point and said that this person was a claimant to prophethood. And God knows that this saying of theirs was quite false, and did not have a modicum of truth in it, and did not have any real basis at all."19

Although Divine comunication is common between a mubahaddath and a prophet, there is still a difference in the mode and subject of their communications. The revelation of a mubahaddath does not consist of anything except glad tidings (mubashshirat) as has been mentioned in the hadith:

"There has remained nothing of Prophethood except glad tidings (mubashshirat)."20 The reason for this is that the mubahaddath appears only in support of religion and prophecies are needed for this purpose, therefore, whatever God communicates to him consists of prophecies or secret informations but the revelation which is vouchsafed to the prophets consists of law (shari’ah) as well. It can add to or change the shari’ah, as the Founder has made it clear in one of his books:

"God communes and communicates with His saints (auliya’) in this nation and they are imbued with the color of prophethood but they are not prophets in reality, for the Qur’an has brought the shari’ah to the point of perfection."21

This means that the righteous servants in this ummah are spoken to by God and they are colored with the color of prophets without their being prophets themselves, because the Law has been made perfect by the Qur’an. This shows that prophets were needed till the shari’ah had not attained to a degree of perfection and addition, subtraction or alteration therein was still needed. Thus, Divine communication is common to both a prophet and a mubahaddath. The distinction, however, between their revelations is that the revelation of a mubahaddath is confined to prophecies or the knowledge of Divine subtleties while in the case of a prophet it also consists of commands of the shari’ah. The second point which is common, in a sense, to both but also distinguishes one from the other is that their denial makes a person liable to punishment. Nobody becomes a kafir by denying the claim of a mubahaddath but the denial of a prophet makes a person kafir, as has been written by the Founder himself:

"To call a denier of one’s claim a kafir is the privilege of those prophets alone who bring from God shari’ah and new commandments, but as to the inspired ones (muhalams) and the ones

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... an Arabic depictions in over a hundred pages, I must not spoil in a brief and hasty sketch.

Custom, convention, book-worship, letter-worship, form-worship, Mullaworship, Pir-worship—these, in short, were the same fettlers on the Muslim’s soul, keeping it in a state of perpetual slavery. Death and decay had consequently marked Muslim society for their own. Slavery is only another name for lifelessness, whereas life means free play. When the soul was robbed of its birthright of free play, decay followed as a matter of course. It was, therefore, one of the Messiah’s programs, as a preliminary to all further progress, to emancipate the Muslim. One by one, he smashed these fettlers to pieces, restoring the Muslim once more to that freedom of the desert which knew no middle terms between man and God. Freedom of the soul, he taught, was a prerequisite of the freedom of body. Mental emancipation must always precede physical emancipation. That was the lesson of all history. That in particular was the lesson of Islamic history. It was not until the Arab mind had been liberated from bondage to idol-worship and superstition that Arabia set her foot on the path of progress. The only abode for a slave mind is a slave body. If the mind was set free the body would follow suit. For no free mind could long dwell in a slave body. There was only one way open for the Muslim, if he wanted to recover his lost temporal glory. Let him first rediscover his lost soul.

The message of the Messiah cannot be put better than in the Messiah’s own verse at the top. It is just like the message that the gentle showers of rain from heaven whisper into the ear of the dead, dry and with the sod quickens to life, as if by the touch of magic. Out comes flora. Out comes foliage. Out comes a whole spring. Even so, every message from Heaven. The germs of life dormant in man. They only await that spiritual downpour from Above to spring to life. The Messiah came with that message of life. “Within you,” he proclaimed, “lie the seeds of all things high, and noble. Here are the showers of a living faith in a living God. Like a good soil, lay open your bosom to this heavenly water and life abundant shall be yours.”

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Various terms about prophethood... exist in the writings of [Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad]. All these terms, however, signify wilayah (sainthood) and muhaddathiyah. These terms are: majazi nabi, zilli nabi, baruzi nabi, ummati nabi, ghair tashri'i nabi, juz'i nabi and lughwii nabi. Some of them have also been used by the Muslim saints before.

1. Majazi nabi is a prophet by way of metaphor and not by way of reality. When a person is called a prophet in the metaphorical sense it cannot mean anything else except that he is not a prophet and that he only bears close resemblance to a prophet in some respects or possesses in himself a particular aspect of prophethood. A real prophet would never say that he is a prophet by way of metaphor or simile. The very use of such terms shows that he is not a prophet. The meaning of majazi nabi has been explained by the Founder himself:

"Muhaddathiyah... if then this be called metaphorically, or be regarded as a strong part of prophethood, does this amount to a claim to prophethood?" 11

2. Zilli nabi means the shadow of a prophet, i.e., a person who has reflected the prophethood of a nabi in the mirror of his personality. If he is endowed with real prophethood the question of reflection is simply meaningless. The Founder has written in Haqiqat al-Wahy that the hearts of truthful persons do not only reflect prophethood but also rabubiyyat (Lordhood): "In the pure mirror of these perfect personages, God had reflected Himself." 12 As by way of Divine reflection they did not attain to Divinity; similarly, reflection of prophethood in their personality did not make them prophets. In the first case they were zill of God and in the second zill of the prophet. As zill Allah is not God, similarly zilli nabi is not a prophet but a saint. "Shadow of prophethood (zilli nubuwwah) the meaning of which is," writes the Founder himself, "to receive revelation through the grace of Muhammad and this will remain in existence till the Day of Resurrection so that the door of perfection might not be closed for human beings." 13 At another place he has clearly stated:

"Such a person is sent in the footsteps of a particular prophet. So he is gifted with the knowledge like the knowledge of his prophet, wisdom like his wisdom, light like his light, and name like his name. God puts the souls of these persons in front of each other like mirrors. The prophet is like the original and the wali (saint) is like his zill (reflection)." 14

Again he says:

"Wilayah (sainthood) is the perfect reflection (zill) of prophethood." 15

3. Baruzi nabi also means the same, i.e., the person in whom the prophethood of another person is manifested. Accordingly the Founder writes:

"All the ummah agrees on this, that a non-prophet, by way of baruz, becomes the deputy of a prophet. This is what is meant by the hadith: 'The learned savants from my ummah are like the prophets of Israelites.'" 16

4. The term ummati has already been explained. The following passage is quoted again to emphasize the point.

"So the fact that he has been called a prophet as well as a follower indicates that he shall possess both the aspects of ummatiyyat (followership) and prophethood, as it is necessary that both these aspects should be found in a muhaddath. But the possessor of perfect prophethood (nubuwwah tamimah) owns one aspect of prophethood only. In short muhaddathiyyah is imbued with both the colours. That is why in Barahin Ahmadiyyah God the Most High gave this humble servant the name of follower as well as prophet." 17

5. Ghair tashri'i nabi also means a wali (saint), because in reality every prophet is a bearer of law—he might bring a new law or only make alterations or additions in the old one—as is clear from the following writing of the Founder:

"God communes and communicates with his saints (auliya)" in this nation and they are imbued with the colour of prophethood but they are not prophets in reality, for the Quran has brought the needs of shari'ah to perfection." 18

Similar is the statement given in Tiyaq al-Qulub: "But as for all the inspired ones (mulhams) and the ones spoken to by God (muhaddathin) others than the possessors of Shari'ah (sahih al-shari'ah) which shows that sahib al-shari'ah are all prophets and persons who belong to the class of non-prophets are those who can be called inspired ones (mulhams) and muhaddathin. Thus whoever is not a possessor of shari'ah is a muhaddath. Muhy al-Din ibn al-'Arabi has used the term law-giver prophet (shari'ah nabi) in this sense. And what he calls prophethood without a code is in fact wilayah or muhaddathiyah.

6. As to juz'i nabi (partial prophet), it is obvious that a part cannot be the whole and partial prophethood cannot be called prophethood; good visions in tradition have also been called the forty-sixth part of prophethood.

7. Lughwii nabi (prophet in the literal or etymological sense) only means one who makes prophecies or one who is the recipient of Divine communion and communication. When this term is used as compared to the terminology of the Shari'ah, this would only signify wilayah and muhaddathiyah as is clear by the Founder's announcement on 3rd February 1892 C.E., the opening words of which are:

"It is submitted for the information of all Muslims that all such words as 'a muhaddath is a prophet in one sense' or 'muhaddathiyah is an imperfect prophethood' which occur in my books Fath Islam, Taudih Maram and Izalat Asham are not to be taken in their real sense, but they have been used simply without any guile in their literal (lughwii) significance."

Notes

1. Izalat Asham (3rd September 1891 C.E.) p. 422.
3. Haqiqat al-Wahy p. 28.
The names of the mujaddids

First century  
‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul ‘Aziz

Second century  
‘Imam Shafi’i, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal

Third century  
‘Abu Sharh and Abu al-Hassan Ash’ari

Fourth century  
‘Abu ‘Ubaidullah of Neshapur, and Qadi Abu Bakr Baqilani

Fifth century  
Al-Ghazali

Sixth century  
Al-Sayyid ‘Abdul Qadir Jalili

Seventh century  
Imam ibn Taimiyyah and Khwajah Mu‘in al-Din Chishti

Eighth century  
Ibn Hajar ‘Asqalani and Salih ibn ‘Umar

Ninth century  
Sayyid Muhammad Jaunpuri

Tenth century  
Imam Suyuti

Eleventh century  
Al-Shaikh Ahmad of Sirhind Mujaddid Alf Thani

Twelfth century  
Shah Wali Allah Muwaddh Dehnavi

Thirteenth century  
Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi

Fourteenth century  
Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

The claims of some of the mujaddids:

‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-Aziz (first century 61–101 A.H. or 680–719 C.E.): “It is reported from Abu Na‘im that once ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-Aziz was going for his prayers and an old man was walking with him. I asked about this old man from ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-Aziz. He said it was Khidr (peace be on him), who came to inform him about his becoming the leader of the ummah of Muhammad and to advise him to act with justice and equity” (Tarikh al-Khulafa’ by Suyuta).

Al-Ghazali (fifth century 450–505 A.H. or 1050–1111 C.E.): “On this matter [i.e., abandoning of retirement from the world which Al-Ghazali had persevered for about ten years — Trans.], I consulted a number of men skilled in the science of the heart and with experience of contemplation. They unanimously advised me to abandon my retirement and leave the zadiyyah (hospice). My resolution was further strengthened by numerous visions of good men in all of which alike I was given the assurance that this impulse was a source of good, was genuine guidance, and had been determined by God most high for the beginning of this century; for God most high has promised to revive His religion at the beginning of each century. My hope became strong and all these considerations caused the favorable view of the project to prevail.

“God most high facilitated my move to Naysapur to deal with this serious problem in Dhu‘l-Qa‘dah, the eleventh month of 499 (July, 1106 C.E.). I had originally left Baghdad in Dhu‘l-Qa‘dah, 488 (November, 1095), so that my period of retirement had extended to eleven years. It was God most high Who determined this move, and it is an example of the wonderful way in which He determined events, since there was not a whisper of it in my heart while I was living in retirement” (Al-Munqidi min al-Dalal, translated by W. Montgomery Watt, The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazali, pp. 74–75, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London 1953). (Italics are mine.)

In the above two sentences we note that ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Aziz does not mention about the Hadith whereas Imam Al-Ghazali does. The former only refers to a visionary experience in which he is told of his leadership of the Muslim community. It is quite possible that a further study of his life may reveal some positive information about his claim as a mujaddid. It is reported from Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (2nd century hijrah) that after mentioning this hadith he said that ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul ‘Aziz was the mujaddid of the first century and Imam Shafi’i of the second century (‘Aun al-Ma‘bud: Sharh Abu Dawud, vol. iv. p. 148). In the case of Imam al-Ghazali, he not only refers to the hadith but also calls this move as determined by God at the same time supported by many visions of the people of the heart which shows that he is fully aware of his role as a mujaddid at the head of the century. So are the other claimants to this office as will be shown below:

Ibn Taimiyyah (seventh century 661–728 A.H. or 1262–1327 C.E.).

In one of his letters Ibn Taimiyyah writes:

“God fulfilled His promise and be-stowed upon His servant victory. The Muslim forces achieved success and the enemy was defeated. . . . Islam received new life and the information of the Holy Prophet, that at the head of every century a mujaddid appears, turned out to be true word for word” (as quoted in Iman Ibn Taimiyyah [Urdu] by Ghulam Jalili Barq, published Lahore).

Al Shaikh Ahmad of Sirhind Mujaddid Alf Thani (eleventh century 971–1034 A.H. or 1563–1624 C.E.): “This knowledge has been derived from the illumination of the lamp of prophethood . . . and the possessor of this knowledge and wisdom is the mujaddid of this thousand years and it must be remembered that a mujaddid has passed at the head of each century but the mujaddid of a thousand years is different from the mujaddid of the century.” (Al-shaikh Ahmad of Sirhind, Maktubat, vol. 2, letter no. 4.

Shah Wali Allah Muwaddh Dehnavi (twelfth century 1114–1176 A.H. or 1703–1763 C.E.): “God honored me with the robe of mujaddidiyyah” (Tajihatul Ilaahiyyah by Shah Wali Allah).

At another place in the same book he says: “He that would be your enemy would neither partake of the blessings of the heaven nor that of the earth. The people of the East and West are all your subjects and you are their ruler, whether they know it or not. Those who know it will be successful and the ignorant will be in loss.”

About the advent of a muhaddath he writes:

“When he comes he is accompanied by revelation (wahy) and the sciences (‘ulum) of the messenger” (Ibid., p. 136).

Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi (thirteenth century 1201–1246 A.H. or 1776–1831 C.E.):

“I have been honored with the rank of Imamat; and I say this in the capacity of a mujaddid . . .” (as quoted in Swanth Ahmad [Urdu], i.e. Life of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi by Muhammad Ja‘far Thanesari, p. 245).

Some people think that a mujaddid does not or should not make a claim about his office and that it is after his death that people come to know about
No Claim to Prophethood... (Continued from page 19)

spoken to by God (muhaddathin) other than the possessors of shari'ah (sahib al-shari'ah), however great their dignity in the sight of God and however much they may have been honored by being spoken to by God, no one becomes a kafir by their denial. 22

None of the followers or opponents of the Founder has proved his definition of muhaddath to be wrong

Besides this the Founder has also referred to some other differences between a muhaddath and a prophet. They are as follows:

1. A prophet receives prophetic revelation (wahy nabuwwah) through the agency of Gabriel, but to non-prophets Gabriel does not personally descend with revelation.

2. A prophet follows his own revelation, but a muhaddath obeys the revelation of his master-prophet.

3. The revelation granted to prophets is a confirmation of the previous prophetic revelation but the revelation granted to saints (wahy wilayah) itself derives its verification from the revelation of their master-prophets.

4. A prophet is a leader (muta') while muhaddath is one who obeys (muti') and a follower (ummati).

5. Prophetic revelation is recited in prayers, whereas the revelation of a muhaddath does not enjoy this status.

Now those who consciously or unconsciously accuse the Founder otherwise giving such definition of a muhaddath as could be applied to a prophet, should have at least shown by a reference to the Qur'an and the Hadith that this definition was wrong and that the line of distinction drawn between the two was not correct, and that a certain point which he said was found both in a prophet and a muhaddath was only found in a prophet… But neither his opponents nor the section of his followers, who assert that the Founder [claimed to be a prophet], have proved so far that the similarities and dissimilarities between a muhaddath and a prophet as mentioned by him had no valid basis.

The word prophet was used only by way of metaphor (Majaz) for muhaddath

The Founder not only denied repeatedly a claim to prophethood but also clearly stated that the word “prophet” was only used in the metaphorical sense for muhaddath, which in fact was his real claim. His books are full of such references. I quote below only a few:

“From the beginning as God knows best, my intention has never been to use this word nabi as meaning a real (haqiq) prophet, but only as signifying a muhaddath, which the Holy Prophet has explained as meaning one who is spoken to by God… Therefore I have not the least hesitation in the reconciliation of my Muslim brethren, by expressing the same idea in another form, and that other form is that wherever the word nabi (prophet) is used in my writings, it should be taken as meaning muhaddath, and the word nabi should be regarded as having been blotted out.”

“The coming Messiah on account of being a muhaddath is also called metaphorically a prophet.”

“If muhaddathiyah is looked upon as prophethood metaphorically, does this amount to a claim to prophethood?”

“In a metaphorical sense God has the right to speak of an inspired servant (mulham) as a prophet or a messenger (the sent one).”

“This humble servant has never laid claim to prophethood or messengership in the real sense of the term. To apply a word in its non-real (ghair haqiq) sense or to use it in conversation in its ordinary literal sense does not amount to heresy (kufr).”

“Here the use of the words ‘messenger’ and ‘prophet’ in Divine communication is just by way of metaphor and simile.”

“To use the word ‘prophet’ or ‘messenger’ for him is not improper but is an eloquent simile.”

“I have been called a prophet of God only by way of metaphor and by way of reality.”

Notes

1. Majmu'ah Ishitharat p. 224.
2. Ishithar 2nd October, 1891 C.E.
3. Taqir Wajib il-Plan at Delhi.
4. Hamamat al-Bushra p. 79.
5. Anjam Athim p. 27, footnote.
7. Ibid., p. 9.
8. Isalah Auhum p. 421.
10. Nishan Asmiy (26th May 1892 C.E.) p. 28.
12. Hamamat al-Bushra p. 79.
13. Ibid., p. 81.
15. Shahadat al-Qur'an (22nd September 1893 C.E.) p. 27.
17. Ibid. 5:111.
20. Al-Bukhari 92:5; Musnad Ahmad.
23. Announcement signed on 3rd February 1892 C.E. at Lahore.
25. Ibid., p. 422.
26. Siraj Munir (1897 C.E.) p. 3.
27. Anjam Athim (1898 C.E.) p. 27 fn.
29. Ibid., fn.
30. Haqiqat al-Wahy (1907 C.E.) p. 5, supplement Isifu'.
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—Alphonse de Lamartine in Histoire de la Turquie

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—Dr. Steingass, Hughes’ Dictionary of Islam

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—George Bernard Shaw