



# The Light

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**Contents:**

	Page
The Call of the Messiah	1
Fasting and <i>Taqwa</i>	
By Inshaal Ahmad	2
Religious Pluralism 5 (Continued)	5
By Craig Considine	
Thomas was murdered in India - 1	8
By David B. Green	



Autumn in Jackson Hole, USA

(like wolves). There are many who appear pure, but in their hearts they are serpents; you cannot be accepted in the presence of the Lord unless you are pure, both outwardly and inwardly.

If you are older or higher up the social ladder, have mercy and not contempt on those who are younger or lower down; if you are wise and well educated, serve the ignorant with words of wisdom. Do not make them feel ashamed of their ignorance by trying to show off your own knowledge. If you are rich, you should serve the poor, instead of treating them with vain and scornful pride.

Beware of the paths leading to destruction. Fear the Lord, be righteous and do not worship the creation of Allah. Turn to Him

completely so much so that you lose interest in this world. Become entirely

His. Living wholly for His pleasure, for His sweet sake. Hating everything impure and sinful for, indeed, He is the Holy One. Every morning should witness that you spent the night in righteousness, and every evening

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

## The Call of the Messiah

by **Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad,**

The Promised Messiah and *Mahdi*

Be kind and merciful to humanity because they are all His (Allah's) creatures. Do not oppress them with your tongue, or your hands, or in any other way. Always work for good of the mankind. Never unduly assert yourselves with pride over others, even those who are junior to you. Do not use abusive language even if someone abuses you. Be humble in spirit, kind and gentle, and forgiving, sympathetic towards everyone and wish them well so that you are embraced (by the mercy of Allah).

There are many who pretend to be kind, gently and forgiving, but inside they are mean

**“Always work for good of the mankind” – The Promised Messiah**

***I Shall Love All Mankind.***



witness that you went through the day with the fear of Allah in your heart.

Do not fear being cursed by people (of this) world because their curses dissolve in air like smoke. They cannot turn light into darkness. What you should be afraid of is the curse that comes from Allah. This will totally destroy those on whom it falls, in both this world and the next.

You cannot save yourselves with hypocrisy and pretence. Sight of God, your Lord, can penetrate the innermost depths of your being. How, then, can you hope to deceive Him? Therefore, reform yourself and purify and cleanse yourself and be firm and steadfast without an atom of uncleanness anywhere in your being. If there is any uncleanness in your soul, it will take away your light. You are not acceptable in the sight of the Lord if in any corner of your heart there is pride, empty pretence, hypocrisy, vanity, love of self, or laziness of character.

Take care! you do not fall into delusion that you have done all that is needed to be done on the basis of one or two things, which you think you have accomplished. Allah desires that your entire life, your whole being, should undergo a deep and complete revolution. He demands from you that you accept a death, after which He will give you another life. Set right all your differences and make peace among yourselves. **Forgive the transgressions of your brothers. Evil is he who is not willing to make peace with his brother. He will be cut off because he tries to create disruption.** Cast off vanity and emphasis on your own self, and all mutual resentments as well as all unpleasantness.

Though truthful and justified in your

stand, be humble as if you were in the wrong, so that you may be treated with forgiveness. Leave off the things which feed your vanity, for the door you have been invited to enter will not admit a person weighed down by it. (From *Noah's Ark*)

## Fasting develops self-discipline of the highest Order

### **Taqwa fosters human dignity and commitment to higher Faith**

(Text of a talk given at the *Iftar* meeting held on 18th June 2016 at Lahore Ahmadiyya Centre at Wembley, London.)

**by Inshaal Ahmad**

“O you, who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may attain *taqwa*.” (The Qur'an 2:183)

“And it is better for you that you fast, if you only knew.” (The Qur'an 2:184)

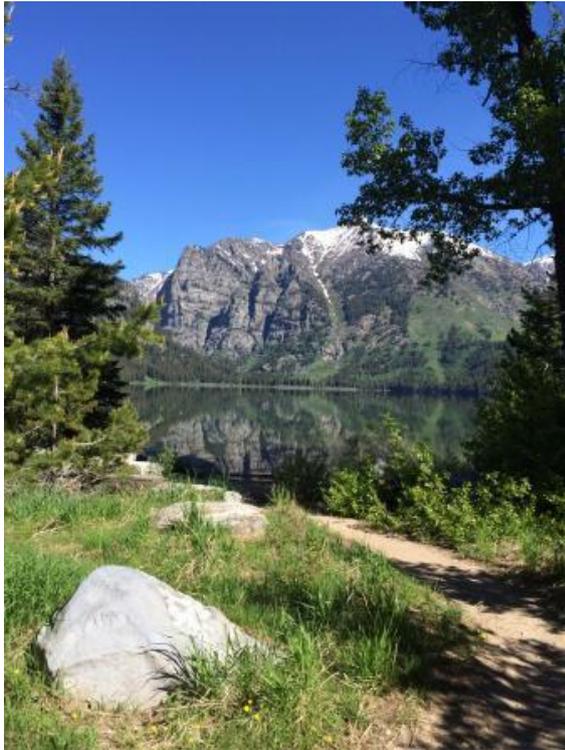
“The most honoured by Allah amongst you are those best in *taqwa*.” (The Qur'an 49:13)

Although *taqwa* is difficult to translate concisely, it may be translated as restraint, fear and tolerance.

### **Fasting promotes discipline**

Although we can focus on many aspects of fasting, today we will focus on the attributes that fasting promotes, particularly self-restraint and tolerance. Fasting and Ramadan can bring about various health benefits depending on how it is conducted, i.e., not eating excessively or unhealthily during the night and not remaining idle during the day (although I am guilty of that myself). The self-restraint and self-control that fasting should foster may help overcome habits or addictions. If, for example, a smoker manages to restrain from smoking for the duration of Ramadan, it is likely that they may even be able to quit. While it takes longer to form a habit, an average of 66 days according to the

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European Journal of Social Psychology, a psychology book from the 1960s entitled Psycho-Cybernetics claims that to get rid of a habit takes around 21 days. So a month of fasting can provide the required discipline, self-restraint and control to stop biting our nails, or eating sugary food or binge-watching TV shows and many other unwanted habits.

On the flipside, in order to maintain the good habits of Ramadan, such as praying *Fajr* on time and reading the Qur'an regularly, we may need the equivalent of two Ramadans. If in Shawwal, the month following Ramadan, we could keep up the habits of Ramadan, it should, with the will of Allah, become ingrained into our lifestyle and no longer become as difficult a task.

### **Power of discipline**

One example of a man who showed the power of discipline was the recently deceased Muhammad Ali (May his soul rest in peace). He famously said:

"I hated every minute of training, but I said, 'Do not quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.'"

Ali started his day off with early morning runs at 5:30 AM. He would stretch before and then he would run 6 miles a day in army type-boots in under 40 minutes. Ali made sure he ate a wholesome breakfast, eating all natural foods while drinking orange juice and plenty of water. After he ran, he would perform some exercises, stretch, and then go back home to get washed up. Ali then went to the gym at 12:30 PM for three hours. He made sure he trained six days a week with just one off day a week.

Muhammad Ali did not just show discipline in his boxing career but also moral principles in his public life, most famously perhaps when he refused to fight in the Vietnam War, probably the only fight he avoided in his life. He said:

"I will not disgrace my religion, my people or myself by becoming a tool to enslave those who are fighting for their own justice, freedom and equality."

He did not think twice before being stripped of his heavyweight title, a title he had worked his entire life to gain and protect. The discipline and principles shown by Muhammad Ali are the essence of fasting and *taqwa*.

### **Forms of hardship**

Fasting requires us to bear hardship in the form of thirst and pangs of hunger. Hazrat Bilal (r), a freed slave, is a shining example of overcoming hardship and suffering. Bilal is very lovingly remembered by all Muslims of the world as one of the earliest great African-Muslims. In the early days of Islam, the tribe of Quraish, who were strong and lived in and around Makkah, disliked Islam. They also disliked Prophet Muhammad (s) and his new teachings. If any person accepted the new religion, they oppressed and harassed him. One day Umayya bin Khalaf came to know of Bilal's secret prayers. He called Bilal and asked, "Oh Bilal, do you worship and bow down to the God of Muhammad (s)?" Bilal was not afraid. He replied, "Yes Master, I do worship Allah, the only God."

The reply angered Umayya greatly. He began to torture Bilal. He was tied with ropes and made to lie on the burning hot desert sand at

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mid-noon. He was then asked to forget the God of Islam and worship the idols. But Bilal was strong in his new belief. He refused to worship idols and kept crying “Ahad, Ahad”, meaning “One God, One God.” The torture continued and was increased. Hot iron rods were stamped on his pained body. Yet Bilal did not give in to the pain.

On one hot day, Bilal lay on the burning hot sand tied to the ground. A very heavy stone was placed over his chest. Bilal could no longer bear the heat and the load so great. He had also grown weak. In that tied condition even water was denied to him. In the condition he lay unconscious. As the day neared its end, it became cooler; he regained his consciousness. He found that the heavy stone was no more on his chest. He wondered who had come to free him from pain. His heavy eyes slowly opened only to look at the bright smiling face of Prophet Muhammad (s).

Prophet Muhammad (s) had heard of and seen the torture of Bilal (r). It pained him extremely to learn that a true believer should suffer in such a manner. He also felt pity for the poor man. He told Abu Bakr (r) to purchase Bilal from Umayya and to set him free. This was done. In similar ways the Holy Prophet (s) had many slaves set free. He insisted that slaves be treated fairly and kindly. By his own conduct he also set such examples.

Among the slaves from Africa, Bilal (r) was the first to accept Islam. He had a strong faith in Allah and a great love for the Holy Prophet (s). He had a pure character. Soon he earned high

respect of the Holy Prophet and other great Muslims of the time. He was addressed Sayedi-na Bilal, Bilaal our elder. The Holy Prophet liked Bilal’s sweet and melodious voice and made him the first *Mu’azzin*: The Caller to the Prayers.

All through his life Bilal remained a close companion of Prophet Muhammad (s) and was with him at every occasion. His grave still exists in the famous Muslim graveyard in Damascus. People still go to his grave to this day to pay respects and salute him. A slave man who became a respected figure throughout the Muslim world achieved such a status initially through *taqwa*, through tolerance, through bearing pain.

### Restraint practiced in food and hardship

During fasting, we must refrain from not only food and drink, but bad thought, action and desires, in order to develop patience, restraint and tolerance. The Prophet Muhammad (s) was undoubtedly one of the greatest role models in many aspects but also in the context of *taqwa*. Patience, restraint and tolerance were one of the many features of his character. A well-known example of the Prophet’s patience and tolerance includes the time when a woman habitually threw garbage upon the Holy Prophet, without any retaliation from him. His patience and tolerance then turned to compassion when the woman stopped throwing garbage on the Holy Prophet, and he went to see if she was well. The compassion, initially stemming from the patience shown by the Holy Prophet, left such an impression on the woman that she accepted Islam. Another well-known example of the Prophet Muhammad’s (s) restraint can be seen in the following short exchange in which the Quraish tribe tried to bribe the Holy Prophet.

And the story goes that...

One day the Quraish tried to induce the Holy Prophet to discontinue his teachings of the new religion which had sown discord among their people. ‘Utba ibn Rabi’a was delegated to see the Holy Prophet and speak to him. ‘Utba said: “O son of my brother, you are distinguished by your qualities; yet you have sown discord among our people and cast dissension in our families; you denounced our gods and god-

***I Shall Love All Mankind.***

dessees and you charge our ancestors with impiety. Now we have come to make a proposition to you, and I ask you to think well before you reject it.”

“I am listening to you, O father of Walid,” said the Holy Prophet.

“O son of my brother, if by this affair you intend to acquire riches, honours, and dignity, we are willing to collect for you a fortune larger than is possessed by any one of us; we shall make you our chief and will do nothing without you. If you desire dominion, we shall make you our king; and if the demon which possesses you cannot be subdued, we will bring you doctors and give them riches until they cure you.”

When ‘Utba had finished his discourse, the Holy Prophet said: “Now listen to me, O father of Walid.”



“I listen,” he replied.

The Holy Prophet recited to him the first thirteen verses of Surah *Fussilat* (Chapter 41). Reaffirming the message of Allah, emphasising to the Quraish

that he would not waver in his message or be bought by any riches of this life. When the Holy Prophet had finished his recitation, he said to ‘Utba: “This is my reply to your proposition; now take what course you find best.”

So, in comparison to the discipline shown by Muhammad Ali, the tolerance shown by Hazrat Bilal (r) and the self-restraint of Prophet Muhammad (s), waking up for *Fajr* or reading the Quran daily is hardly a mountain to climb. So let us try to maintain *taqwa* not only in Ramadan but the month following Ramadan and the year until the next Ramadan, so that this time next year discipline, self-restraint and tolerance will be ingrained into our lives.

## An Analysis of Prophet Muhammad’s (s) Covenants with Christians – 5

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(Continued from the July 2016 issue)

The “Eastern” (ethnic) versus “Western” (civic) model for nation building is not just a historical argument; many scholars see the continuation of historical patterns in current national identities in the East versus West framework. According to Brubaker, the twenty or so “post-communist” states of Eastern Europe were “conceived and justified, in the nationalist movements ... as the state of and for a particular ethno-national group”. As such, in Eastern Europe, understandings of nationality have become institutionalized and fundamentally “ethno-cultural” rather than “political”. However, some scholars have attacked the narrow logic that ethnic nations are simply “ethnic” in the sense of being emotionally-charged and exclusive entities based only on dominant ethno-cultural groups. Quebec and Flanders, for example, have been labelled “ethnic nations” but in actuality can be treated as “cultural nations”. Quebec and Flanders do not restrict immigration or necessarily give preference to ethnically similar individuals. However, they do encourage assimilation into the prominent culture and give preference for “culturally similar immigrants” in terms of immigration policies. In this sense, a government that pursues the cultural assimilation of minorities is a “cultural nation”; cultural unity is seen as the foundation for a strong nation-state. The differences between the cultural and ethnic nation model is that “cultural nations” encourage assimilation whereas “ethnic nations” do not, because the latter concept demarcates culture by ancestry and “race”, which cannot be gained or learned by human effort. Another topic of interest in discussions about the nature of cultural nations is the role

***I Shall Love All Mankind.***

religion plays in relation to “national belonging”. A cultural nation can be seen as having key components such as religion, language, and tradition. As discussed below, Prophet Muhammad (s) did not require Christians to convert to Islam, nor did he encourage them to assimilate into “Muslim culture”. In effect, he distanced himself from the cultural and ethnic nations and moved the *ummah* closer to the civic approach in terms of nation-building.

Prophet Muhammad (s) insisted that the Muslim national group boundary is not the property of any particular religious or ethnic group. In this regard, he can be seen as being a “political pluralist” in that he desired “a political culture of non-centralised action, which endows civic centres of activity with initiative rather than imagining that the state has to license and delegate everything from the top”. For the state to give preference to one or more groups means devaluing citizens based upon their ethnic or cultural backgrounds. The Prophet did not want to inflict harm on Christians, nor interfere or encroach on their privacy or private property. In the Covenant with the Christians of the World, he laid down the injunction:

“The covenant of Allah is that I should protect their land, their monasteries, with my power, my horses, my men, my strength, and my Muslim followers in any region, far away or close by, and that I should protect their businesses. I grant security to them, their churches, their businesses, their houses of worship, the places of their monks, the places of their pilgrims, wherever they may be found...”

This is the sanctity of privacy and property rights that Muhammad (s) granted Christian citizens in an Islamic state. The rights he granted them are “not simply a claim of individuals against the state but a claim of individuals that the state itself underwrites for the good of all”. These rights include property rights of individuals as a basic condition for democratic citizenship. Prophet Muhammad (s) instructed his followers to follow these commands, and stated that any Muslim that disobeys them acts against the will of God. Muslims who disrespect his ordinances are “[enemies] on the Day of Judgment

among all the Muslims”. In the Covenant with the Christians of the World, a civic conception of the nation was developed by Muhammad (s) in the sense that ethnic or cultural unity was not a requisite for belonging to the *ummah*. People in a civic nation are united by such traits as common citizenship, respect for law and state institutions, and belief in a set of political principles. Nevertheless, it is important to discuss another characteristic of civic nations, that is cultural preservation and access to political power among minority communities. As Kymlicka argues, the idea that the government of a civic nation could be neutral with respect to ethnic and national groups is patently false. He claims that the government of a civic nation “cannot avoid deciding which societal cultures will be supported”. However, Kymlicka may be overly hasty in arguing that a civic nation acts unfairly towards minorities. While Prophet Muhammad (s) did use the Qur’an as the basis for his political philosophy, he did not “take sides” in terms of offering citizenship in a diverse and pluralistic society like Arabia in the 7th century.

Stilz offers several views on this issue of neutrality in a civic nation. One, “neutrality of impact”, sees neutrality as “a thesis about the consequences of government action. It holds that the state should pursue no policies that have the end result that one way of life is advantaged, favoured, or assisted in ways others are not”. The other, “neutrality of justification”, sees neutrality as “a thesis about the kind of reasons for which governments should act”. In terms of neutrality of justification, specific laws are not created to impinge upon the beliefs or practices of minorities. One potential way to argue against the validity of “neutrality” in Prophet’s (s) *ummah* is by turning to the “*dhimmi* rules”, as discussed in the previous section. While *dhimmi* literally means “protected person”, *dhimmis* in Muhammad’s (s) *ummah* were asked to pay the *jizya* and faced certain political restrictions. However, as Glenn points out, *dhimmis* were treated equally in practically the whole of the law of property and of contracts and obligations. Throughout Islamic history, there are plenty of instances where “Muslim nations” treated Christians equally in the court of

***I Shall Love All Mankind.***

law. For example, in the early Caliphate, Al-Andalus, Indian subcontinent, and the Ottoman Millet system, qadis (Islamic judges) typically did not interfere in the legislative or legal matters of Christians. Christians living in these “Muslim nations” were granted the right to create and maintain their own laws independent of *sharia*. Moreover, throughout history, Christians and Jews living as *dhimmis* were allowed to engage in practices such as the consumption of alcohol and pork, both of which are forbidden under *sharia*. While an argument can be made that Christians were excluded from specifically Muslim privileges, one can also make the argument that they were excluded from specifically Muslim duties like serving as soldiers during times of war. The Muslim nation as designed by Prophet Muhammad (s) can be regarded as anti-hierarchical and non-centralist in terms of governance; it was meant to be a confederation of religious groupings rather than a space for Muslims alone. Citizenship in Muhammad’s (s) nation did not derive from the solidarity of people who feel responsible for - and committed to - members of a single racial or ethnic community, but rested on the ability of citizens to get a “fair hearing” for their views and “fair protection of their interests”. The Prophet’s nation entailed no need for religious unity or conversion to Islam.

Perhaps the most obvious of the civic rights that Muhammad (s) gave to Christians was freedom of conscience. As the ruler of the first Islamic state, he did not require Christians to adopt the religion or culture of the majority nation, hence why he told the Christians of Persia: “No Christian shall be brought by force to confess Islam, and no disputes except over the better things shall be envisaged in with them”. This type of governance follows the concept of civic nation because a civic nation takes account of their fellow citizens’ interests; citizens are also not forced to adopt the cultural practices of the majority within. In the Covenants, Prophet Muhammad (s) established civic national principles by creating a fair set of rules within which Christians had equal opportunity to make free choices (perhaps based on their cultural prefer-

ence). If Muhammad (s) had favoured an “ethnic” framework for his nation, he would have tried to forcibly incorporate and assimilate Christian minorities into the dominant “Muslim culture”.

Although modern conceptions of “citizenship” are largely considered products of the Enlightenment, the Covenants demonstrate that “Islamic civilization” conceived of citizenship rights long before the aforementioned period in history. To reiterate, Prophet Muhammad (s) defended the rights of Christians in an Islamic state by offering them security and protection in moments of danger or strife. He elaborates in the Covenant with the Christians of the World:

“defend them from any damage, harm or retribution. I am behind them, protecting them from every enemy or anyone who wishes them harm... In virtue of this pact, [Christians] have obtained inviolable rights to enjoy our protection, to be protected from any infringement of their rights, and they are not to be disputed, rejected or ignored so that they will be bound to the Muslims both in good and bad fortune.”

The language that Muhammad (s) used in his Covenants is remarkably similar to that of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, a political document passed by France’s National Constituent Assembly in 1789. Article VI of this document states that citizens of the French Republic are to be treated equally under the law. French citizens should be “eligible to all honours, places, and employments, according to their different abilities without any other distinction than that created by their virtues and talents”. Like the Covenants with the Christians of the World and the Christians of Persia, Article XII of the Declaration declares that state officials are permitted to use public force if necessary “to give security to the rights of men and of citizens”. The Covenants, therefore, exhibit civic principles in that “national belonging” is not predicated on race, ethnicity, or religion, but rather “rational attachment” to a political body. Membership into the Muslim nation is open equally and without any qualification or restriction. In this sense it embodies the univer-

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salism of Islam: the nation becomes a consciousness of belonging to a religious and political community that is independent of the Muslim state. While the Covenants may be interpreted as requiring only Muslims themselves - and not the actually Islamic state - to protect Christians, one can also argue that Muhammad's (s) role as Caliph of the *ummah* and his commandments outlined in the Covenants were in fact a type of "law" alongside the Qur'an and hadiths. As the Qur'an (4:59) notes, "O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you...". This verse gives us the basis of Islamic political authority and tells us that Muslims are to obey the commandments of the Prophet. As the leader of the *ummah*, Muhammad (s) used his authority to dictate official state policies in relation to Christian minorities. One can, therefore, surmise that it was not simply individual Muslims who were called upon to protect Christians, but rather than entire state itself as led by the Prophet.

*(To be continued in the next issue)*

## Thomas the Apostle Is Murdered in India - 1

by David B. Green

According to common Christian tradition, 'doubting' Thomas, a practicing Jew, was killed by jealous Hindu priests of Kali in 72 CE. December 21 in the year 72 C.E. is the day of the martyrdom of Thomas the Apostle, according to the tradition of a number of Christian churches.

Like all of the 12 apostles, or disciples, of Jesus, Thomas was a practicing Jew, and was given the mission by his mentor to spread his teachings, both among the Jews and the Gentiles.

In both the Book of John, one of the Gospels

of the New Testament, and in the apocryphal Acts of Thomas, Thomas is described as "Thomas, who is called *Didymus*," a redundancy, since "Thomas" comes from the Aramaic word *teoma*, meaning "twin" (in Hebrew, it is *te'om*), for which the word in Greek is *didymus*.

It is not clear either from the Gospels, written at the end of the 1st century, or from the Acts of Thomas, from the 2nd century, just whose twin Thomas was meant to be, but there are several references in classical sources that suggest that he was the brother either of the Apostle Jude (son of James) or of Jesus himself.

None of the sources tell us about Thomas' origins, but like the other apostles, he is presumed to come from the Galilee, like Jesus, and to have returned there to teach after Jesus' death.

Thomas was the first "doubting Thomas," because he refused to believe the reports of sightings of a resurrected Jesus until, according to John 20:25, "I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the print of the nails, and place my hand in his side..." (Revised Standard Version).

A short time later, Jesus appears to Thomas, and the latter calls him "my Lord and my God," and Jesus seems to mock him gently when he responds, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." (John 20:29).

Earlier, when told by his teacher that he will be departing soon to prepare a home in heaven for his followers, who will be joining him there one day, the practical-minded Thomas says, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" (John 14:5).

The assignment of December 21 as the date of Thomas' death is derived from a tradition that anyone who fits the description of a "doubting Thomas" might have some difficulty giving credence to. *(To be continued)*

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