

HAZRAT MIRZA BASHIR-UD-DIN MAHMUD AHMAD

Islam The Future World Religion

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Khalifatul-Masih II

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Islam the Future World Religion is an abbreviated essay taken from a lecture delivered by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad^{ra}, the second khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, on 11 April 1920 in Sialkot. At the heart of the essay is the question of what the future world religion will be, with a detailed explanation from Huzoor as to why, in his estimation, Islam will soon emerge as the dominant religious force in the world.

نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ¹

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Islam The Future World Religion

(Delivered by Khalifatul Masih II^{ra} on 11 April 1920 in Sialkot)

After reciting *Surah Fatimah*, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II^{ra} said:

There are numerous religions in the world today, all of which claim that [only] they can lead to redemption and spread throughout the world. Such contentions are not new, rather they have been made since the remotest ages, and [for centuries] people have fought over the question of which religion should be universally accepted. Therefore, when this controversy has persisted from the earliest [stages of human history], without any

¹ In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. We praise Allah, the Exalted, the Greatest, and we invoke His blessings on His Holy Messenger^{sa}. [Publishers]

seeming resolution, what is so different now that a fresh discussion is merited? After all, when has a religion found universal acceptance in the past that it may do so now? Islam has existed for 1300 years, Christianity for 1900 years, Hinduism for several millennia, and Zoroastrianism, according to certain claims, is hundreds of thousands of years old. None of these faiths have [at any time in their history] won the hearts of the entire world, that it may be argued that one of them will be accepted by all people in the future. Nor has any major new religion emerged which might be seen as a global faith. This is a valid question and it is only natural that it is raised. Therefore, I first intend to address this legitimate concern.

It is undoubtedly true that no religion has ever prevailed in the entire world. But it is also true that current religious dynamics are unlike anything seen in the past. Our present

circumstances, as opposed to [a particular event like] the advent of a new faith movement, have caused people to think again about what the future global religion might be.

In the past, people of different nations lived in isolated communities because the means of communication present today were not available to them. Hence, the scope and parameters of their faith were geographically limited. But now, because of [technological advancements like] railway lines, the post, the telegraph, airplanes, and other similar means [of communication], the world has come together as a single country—perhaps even as a [global] city. And due to the printing press and the spread of information and knowledge, the teachings of all religions are accessible to everyone. Increasing openness and tolerance have spurred an interest in the study of other faiths. People can reflect on each other's religious beliefs and come to know

of their respective merits without difficulty. These circumstances have made it easier to determine which of the world's religions is the greatest and possesses every excellence.

Christians have taken advantage of this growing tolerance and climate of inquiry into other religions by systematically publishing numerous tracts and books in support of their faith, and within the span of two centuries, tens of millions of people have joined the fold of their religion. They have spread Christianity to such parts of the world where previously the inhabitants had not even heard its name. In India alone, three to four million people have converted to Christianity. Therefore, naturally, when faced with such astounding growth, people began to consider its implications. But before their eyes had fully opened to what was happening, the political landscape of the world altered in such a way that presently there is not a single powerful nation in the world that is

not under Christian rule.

There are three major world religions, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. Hinduism possesses no significant proselytizing movement. A recent minor sect, the Arya [Samaj], has emerged [with aims of conversion] though their following is small. Hitherto, their efforts have yielded limited success and their preaching activities are restricted to uncultivated communities which are in fact [just other types of] Hindus. We are then left with Christians and Muslims and as I have mentioned with relation to the former, their preaching activities have succeeded in converting millions of people.

Muslims though have completely failed in this, even though Islam commands them to preach their faith. Consequently, this has significantly weakened the Muslim community, and in addition, a series of setbacks and catastrophes have led [some] to believe that

Islam cannot be established in the world. This has opened their eyes and they have realised that if they continue on the same path of decline, they stand no chance of competing with Christianity.

If it is determined that Islam cannot compete with Christianity, then it has to be admitted that the time has come when, if not all, at least the majority of the world will become Christian. And if Islam can contend with Christianity and even surmount it, then it must be conceded that Islam will be the next global religion. For the time has come for the true faith to spread throughout the world.

Thus seeking answers to this question is neither pointless nor futile. The circumstances of our age are forcefully telling us to take heed and recognise that either our own faith, Islam, or Christianity will be the future religion of the world.

This is no ordinary question, rather it is of the utmost importance, and with a view to its significance and the fact that people are giving it an increasing measure of thought, I have considered it appropriate to express my own opinions on which of Islam or Christianity will eventually prevail as the global faith.

A second reason for contemplating this question now is that at the present time, Muslims are in a state of decline and stand on the precipice of despair. Therefore to save them from this despondency—the loss of hope is ever the source of defeat and failure—I have deemed it necessary to say that Islam will for certain be the next global religion, and no power or force can ever expunge it. Islam stands upon a sturdy rock from which it cannot be dislodged. It will grow and surely prosper.

Following this, Huzoor negated the false

allegations that Christians make against Islam to prove to people that it is not a sustainable religion. In particular, through the use of rational and logical arguments, Huzoor discredited the assertion that a faith which does not evolve with the times cannot be true. He said:

I accept that an incomplete faith whose teachings do not accord with the needs of every age, will adapt itself in accordance with the changes of the time. However, I cannot concede that a religion which fulfils the requirements of every age should also have to evolve in this way.

Huzoor then demonstrated which of Islam or Christianity adequately fulfils the needs of every age by undertaking a comparison of both religions and showing that the teachings of the latter have not withstood the test of time and are, therefore, being changed. Conversely, the teachings of Islam are such that if the way of life of a certain era goes against them,

then there is no need to alter the teachings of Islam, rather the customs of the age eventually fall in line with them. For example, in the case of divorce or the permitted number of wives, [western nations] who once strongly objected to divorce, have eventually come to accept this practice. Divorce laws have now been passed in England, and are primarily rooted in Islamic principles and are present in the Hanafi school of jurisprudence.

Huzoor then continued this comparison in a precise and well-reasoned manner and made it clear that Islam stands firm on its roots, whereas Christianity is pliable. [Therefore] it cannot compete with Islam and this is why Islam will be the next global religion. Continuing with this theme, Huzoor said:

Today, there is particular importance placed on [obtaining knowledge] through observation and [experience]. Accordingly, with regards to religion, the question arises as to why, if God

spoke in the past, does He not communicate with people in the present age. Yet if God were to speak now, then the followers of the faith to whom He addressed His revelation would have to be considered true. Only Islam can answer this question, for it says that God speaks today just as He did before. In this age, God spoke with Hazrat Mirza Sahib^{as} who stood up to serve the cause of Islam. Thus it is the only religion which can satiate the [spiritual] thirst of all people, and fulfil their needs and that is why it will be the next world religion.

After this, Huzoor spoke of the current state of the Muslim world. He said:

Though it is passing through an anxious moment, this too is a sign of its truth as God Almighty had already [prophesied] that when the Muslims would forgo [the teachings] of Islam, their circumstances would deteriorate. Now because they have let go of God Almighty, the Holy Phophet^{sa} and the Holy Qur'an,

they have met their plight. Moreover, their beliefs are such that they give opportunity to [the opponents of Islam] to attack and malign God Almighty and the Holy Prophet^{sa}.

At this juncture, a note appears in the Alfazl report that one of Huzoor's recent dreams is being reproduced as it relates to the subject matter. Huzoor narrated the dream as follows:

Last night [in a dream] I saw a house and behind it a street. There were people there who were lying with their heads faced down and it appeared that they were prostrating before an individual. I was angered by this and approached them to make them stop. As I got closer it dawned on me that they were not in fact prostrating, but instead their cheeks were touching the ground while they looked up to the sky and crawled forward. I too looked upwards and saw a large settlement. A special kind of light glowed there and the Promised Messiah^{as}

was sitting in a vessel that resembled a ship which sought to descend to the ground. The people [around me] also spoke of seeing the Promised Messiah^{as}. The vessel touched down like an airplane and I searched for Hazrat Sahib^{as} but could not find him anywhere. I grew sad at the thought that perhaps he was angry with me and did not want to see me. Eventually, I made my way to my mother in the hope that he might be with her. My eyes were full of tears and I told her that Hazrat Sahib^{as} had not met with me, that he might be displeased. She told me that she was leaving for somewhere on a horse-drawn carriage accompanied by Sharif Ahmad and Aziz Ahmad, but as soon as she heard that Hazrat Sahib^{as} had come she hurriedly returned, but had not met with him either. Her words soothed me. At seeing my tears [my] mother said all this was just a vision and visions are there to be interpreted. I was further

reassured and understood that this was indeed a vision, and the reasons I had thought of for Hazrat Sahib^{as} not meeting with [me] were all mistaken. In the vision itself, I was shown three interpretations of what it meant. I told myself that I would either write a book in a language that I am not familiar with, deliver a glorious speech that would be unparalleled, or [receive] a mighty sign. After this I woke up.

After concluding his address, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II^{ra} said:

While I was making my speech it appeared to me that there was a light suddenly descending from the heavens and entering me. And then, because of this, my body started radiating such rays that I felt that I had begun to pull the audience towards me. And they, bound together, kept gravitating towards me.

(Alfazl, 09 April 1920)

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