

Khilafat and Morality

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“*God is dead.*” What were the inner workings of the madman of Friedrich Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science* has sadly materialized into today’s reality. Nietzsche realized more than 100 years prior that a lack of attention to God demanded the death of humanity and the advent of the age of nihilism. Whatever text or philosophy one may reference, if there is no unified concept of God, no absolute morals exist and everyone is at liberty to pursue their own ambitions, even at the cost of one’s fellow man. Ultimately, a moral *Zeitgeist* (lit. “Spirit of the times”) emerges, whereby moral norms continuously shift according to the times. As fate would have it, a contemporary of Nietzsche, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India (pbuh) was furnishing irrefutable evidence that “God Lives!” Hazrat Ahmad soon declared that God had appointed him as the Promised Messiah and established the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (Ahmadiyyat) - the prophesized Renaissance of Islam. Before his passing, the Promised Messiah (pbuh) established a system of Khilafat, literally “successorship.” The Promised Messiah (pbuh) explained that this Khilafat was a Divine institution, whereby the Community was to be cared for by a Divinely appointed individual. The success of the Community, and consequently that of man, would now arise only from obedience to this Khilafat.

Before arguing if the institution of Khilafat is capable of inculcating morality in man, let us first define morality. Oxford Dictionary defines morality as, “*principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior.*” Now, it is important to establish the view of some differing opinions on morality, and Islam’s view regarding these schools of thought. Moral absolutism argues that some objective moral values do exist, and define actions as right or wrong regardless of context, e.g. human rights. In contrast, moral relativism argues that no set of universal, absolute moral values exist – morality is to be defined case-by-case – based on sociological, historical, and cultural circumstances.

According to Islam, the one overriding moral absolute is righteousness. Regardless of circumstance, righteousness remains transcendent. For example, while Prophet Muhammad (saw) stressed keeping of one's oath, he felt that truth trumped the former if the two conflicted: “*He who took an oath and (later on) found another thing better than that, he should do that which is better, and expiate for the vow*” (Sahih Muslim). Islam also declares *niyyat* (intention) to be a moral absolute. Prophet Muhammad (saw) stated, “*Deeds are judged by motives*” (Sahih Bukhari). For example, if one practices chastity only because of health reasons rather than viewing it as a virtue, his action cannot be considered righteous. This view is in accordance with the German philosopher Immanuel Kant who argued that only an act performed in accordance with “good will” is morally praiseworthy. While Kant's view is strongly opposed to the utilitarian belief that an action’s goodness is to be measured by its outcome – “the end justifies the means” – Islam disagrees to some extent. Islam argues that man should inculcate morals because it is a righteous action, but also indicates that behaving in such a manner results in the creation becoming the beloved of the Creator. For example, the Quran provides a great incentive for man to be truthful: “**Allah will say, ‘This is a day when only the truthful shall profit by their truthfulness. For them are Gardens beneath which streams flow; therein shall they abide forever. Allah is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him; that indeed is the supreme achievement’**” (5:120).

While holding views consistent with moral absolutism, Islam also acknowledges that morality is relative. But how is one to inculcate righteousness with a constantly evolving moral framework? Islam argues that the exercise of wisdom, meaning the marriage of knowledge with righteousness, allows man to answer any moral dilemma. For example, the Holy Quran declares regarding Jesus Christ (pbuh), “**And when Jesus came with clear proofs, he said, ‘Truly, I have come to you with wisdom, and to make clear to you some of that about which you differ. So fear Allah and obey me’**” (43:64).

The Quran further declares that this same principle of wisdom was employed in the creation of the universe, “**He has created the heavens and the earth in accordance with the requirements of wisdom. Exalted is He far above all that they associate with Him**” (16:4). As God's Word and Act cannot contradict, it follows

that God encourages man to utilize wisdom, as this universe has been made in accordance with the same principle. Ultimately, an evolving system continuously presents scenarios demanding different behavior at different times. Thus, Islam mandates that absolutism and relativism both have a role, by employing righteousness and wisdom.

Inseparable from morality is the idea of conscience. Those who reject the role of God in creating conscience in man argue that conscience is a learned behavior. Reciprocal altruism states that the development of early man necessitated that he work with one another in an amicable manner to ensure survival. Consequently, it was society that was the *causa causarum* – the impetus for the creation of a conscience. Islam most certainly agrees that society has an effect on morality, and is in fact shaped along with the shaping of society. This, in fact, was what Prophet Muhammad (saw) meant when he declared, “*Every child is born a Muslim, it is the parents that turn him/her into a Christian, a Jew or a pagan.*” Islam also states that conscience, up to the advent of Islam, was, as Thomas Aquinas believed, not an entity, but a process: “*(Conscience is) reason making right decisions.*” Indeed, the Holy Quran declares that Islam was revealed as the culmination of an intellectual and moral evolutionary process: “**This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion**” (5:4).

But society playing a role in the development of conscience does not necessitate that society is the Creator of conscience. Why are animals, enduring the same environmental conditions as man, only concerned with survival? Yes, some animals do exhibit some basic form of compassion, but there is no element of “right and wrong.” Ultimately, while subjected to the same environment and holding the same basic interests as man, i.e. survival, they possess no conscience. It is apparent then, that if society was not the cause, another Cause installed some software in man that has come to be known as “conscience” and has developed along with the development of society.

Now, one may argue, “Why can an atheist not be moral?” Islam does not believe that an atheist cannot be moral, rather it argues that an atheistic *approach* of inculcating morality into society is not plausible. An approach that removes God from the equation fails for the same reason communism has failed – “*From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.*” The issue is, who determines ability and who determines need? Man will inevitably attempt to maximize his own individual utility, even at the expense of others. This occurs because no God exists. No God means no accountability. There is no entity to hold one responsible for one’s actions. Consequently, morality begins to decline, as morality becomes an obstacle in fulfilling these desires. For example, although morally reprehensible, one cannot be punished by the law for denying a starving person a loaf of bread. However, when one has the knowledge that he will one day answer to God for his actions, his behavior becomes refined.

Some may object that a secular law can fill the void. After all, we have police patrolling the streets and a court to try those who violate the law. This is the mode for keeping people accountable. This approach can create a public morality that defines acceptable conduct. For example, American cultural norms, because of American law, have determined that lewd behavior, violence, theft, profanity, public intoxication, etc. are inappropriate modes of conduct. But a moral system based on such a transient entity as secular law will inevitably conform to the wants of society, not the other way around. Views on public morality change over time – these days' views on foul language, clothing, under-age drinking, and inter-gender relations have become increasingly lax. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, a moral *Zeitgeist* has emerged. Ultimately, an entirely secular approach fails at ensuring accountability because they attempt to enforce morality.

In contrast, a system that bases accountability on the existence of an Omnipotent and Omniscient God emphasizes volition. As the Holy Quran declares, “**There is no compulsion in religion. Surely, the right way has become distinct from error; so whosoever refuses to be led by those who transgress, and believes in Allah, has surely grasped a strong handle that knows no breaking. And Allah is All-Hearing. All-Knowing**” (2:257).

Hazrat Mirza Tahir (rh), the 4th Khalifa of Ahmadiyyat, states, “*Genuine implementation of this legislation*

(morality) is guaranteed and impregnated by belief in an All-Knowing God. The believer can never escape His knowledge of whatever He does or intends to do. No man-made law enjoys this advantage in relation to its implementation. It invariably fails to protect the system which they legislate, because of the absence of awareness in the mind of the criminal that he is being watched by the law-makers. Legislation alone, however much fortified with the threats of punishment, cannot stay the hand of the criminal. Its influence does not reach the breeding ground of crime—the hidden soil of secret intentions. The criminal always seeks shelter in his hope that like his intentions, his act of crime will also escape the eye of the law. To seek protection in the lap of falsehood is another major abettor of crime. Man's propensity and impetuous tendency to commit crime is directly proportional to his hope of escaping detection. Hence, legislation alone can never succeed in uprooting social evils, because it lacks the vital prerequisite of reaching the dark abysses where crimes are nurtured. Most evils are perpetrated behind the smokescreen of imagined invisibility and unaccountability. However advanced the techniques of detection may become, they can never shake the confidence of the criminal in his calculated hope of escaping detection because he plans and plots safely hidden from the sight of law, couched in the secret chambers of his heart.”¹

No action is performed without a subsequent approval or disapproval from God. Belief in God then mandates one will perform only those actions that will please Him. As Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (pbuh) states, *“The wicked spirit of sin seeks to destroy a man and a person cannot escape the fatal poison of sin till he believes with full certainty in the Perfect and Living God and till he knows for certain that God exists, Who punishes the offender and bestows upon a righteous one every lasting joy. It is a common experience that when one believes in the fatal effects of anything one does not have recourse to it. For instance, no one swallows poison consciously. No one deliberately stands in front of a wild tiger. No one deliberately thrusts his hand into the hole of a serpent. Then why does a person commit sin deliberately? The reason is that he has not that certainty in this matter as he has in other matters of the kind that we have mentioned.”²*

Having explained the various secular positions on what constitutes morality and Islam's verdict regarding morality, we now turn to the question of Khilafat. What in fact is Khilafat and how can it resolve the pressing issues of immorality today? According to Prophet Muhammad (saw), after the advent of the Promised Messiah, God would establish a system of Khilafat, *“Prophethood shall remain among you as long as Allah shall will. He will bring about its end and follow it with Khilafat on the precepts of prophethood for as long as He shall will and then bring about its end ... There will then emerge Khilafat on precept of Prophethood”* (Masnad Ahmad).

Regarding this prophecy, the Promised Messiah (pbuh) explains, *“A Khalifa is a reflection of a Prophet. As man is mortal, God Almighty designed that Prophets, who are more exalted and honored than all other beings, should be reflectively preserved forever. For this purpose, God instituted Khilafat so that the world should at no time be deprived of the blessings of Prophethood.”³*

In essence, Khilafat allows man to experience the blessings of prophethood indefinitely. While all prophets have passed away, their message, and consequently morality, has been preserved due to this Divine institution. The Promised Messiah (pbuh) further states one avenue available for obtaining certainty in God's existence is through keeping company with the righteous and can be achieved by recognizing the Khalifa, *“The first duty of a person, therefore, is to acquire certainty with regard to the existence of God, and to adopt a religion through which this certainty can be acquired so that he should fear God and shun sin. How can such certainty be acquired? It cannot be acquired through mere stories. It cannot be acquired through mere arguments. The only way of acquiring certainty is to experience God repeatedly through converse with Him or through witnessing his extraordinary signs, or by keeping company with someone who has that*

1 (Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge & Truth, p. 210)

2 (Naseem-e-Dawat, Ruhani Khazain, Vol.19, pp. 81-82)

3 (Shahadat-ul-Qur'an, Ruhani Khazain, Vol. 6, pp. 352-356)

experience."⁴

Having explained how righteousness can be achieved, one must then examine what duties a Khalifa holds, and if these responsibilities can protect societal morality. According to Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, the 2nd Khalifa of Ahmadiyyat, *"The Khalifa has two primary objectives. One is to save the Community from contamination of any kind and the second is to unite and direct the individual powers of all members under one leadership."*⁵ That is, that the Khalifa is responsible for safeguarding the morals of mankind, and for maintaining a unified body of the righteous. Throughout history, no community ever came to power without being unified. In contrast, the destruction of every nation has the common underlying theme of disunity and internal corruption. By highlighting moral conduct, Khilafat ensures that unity remains as the constant theme of a body of believers.

That Khilafat has been instituted *"...to save the Jamaat from contamination of any kind..."* provides a vast but detailed picture of the primary duty of Khilafat. What contamination does any nation need protection from? On a societal level, a Khalifa helps to ensure that the elected officials of the secular government are righteous and whose interest coincides with the interest of the state. A high sense of accountability is impressed upon all leadership. Sadly, the contemporary state of political affairs is diametrically opposed to this scenario. The Holy Quran states, **"Surely, Allah changes not the condition of a people until they change that which is in their hearts"** (13:12). By obeying the Khalifa, political leaders become righteous, as their constituency embodies the same ideal.

Oftentimes critics presuppose that adherence to Khilafat requires one to abstain from all worldly ambitions. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan Sahib (ra), one of the greatest scholars of Islam and indeed one of the greatest men of the modern world, held the office of Chief Justice of the International Court of Justice at The Hague as well as President of the United Nations General Assembly. When asked how he was able to accomplish such great feats he immediately replied, *"Because through [out] all my life, I was obedient to Khilafat."*

One may argue that a commoner is not in a position to harm society on a large scale. If one is immoral, they are only hurting themselves. If Islam promotes the freedom of conscience, why should one have to obey the Khalifa? In fact this has been the hallmark of mainstream Muslims worldwide. They argue that possession of the Holy Quran and the recorded life of Prophet Muhammad (saw) abrogates the need for any Khalifa. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh), 4th Khalifa of Ahmadiyyat, comments, *"The Muslims who should have been united and be in harmony, are divided in countless sects and divisions. It is not only in religious field but in politics too ... By discord and disharmony the power of the Muslim world has not only disintegrated, but also they are using this broken strength against one another ... Therefore, it is incumbent that Muslims should unite on the hand of One Imam ... But without Khilafat, it is just impossible... When you go to the mosque for Namaz, five times a day, there must be an Imam. Standing behind an Imam is a demonstration of unity among people. That is why the Holy Quran especially emphasizes the need of congregational prayer. Imam is given so much importance that if the Imam falters, the entire congregation must follow his mistake even if they know that a mistake has been committed. What better instance can be presented for the need of an Imam and unity in his following? If Imam is mandatory in a small mosque, then how can the whole of the Muslim Ummah survive without an Imam? As far as the Ummah is concerned, there is the commandment in the Holy Quran to turn their faces towards Qibla. For the Muslims throughout the world, there is one and only one Qibla. You may go anywhere in the world, the Qibla remains the same. This is a pointer that it is incumbent for the Muslim Ummah that they should be united under one Imam. Had this not been the sole purpose, there would have been no Khilafat at all because the spiritual condition of Muslims in the days of the Holy Prophet (saw) was a thousand times better than the Muslims of today. If they needed to follow an Imam, how can we live without an Imam today when the condition of Muslims is crying for it? This is the answer why Khilafat is*

⁴ (Naseem-e-Dawat, Ruhani Khazain, Vol.19, pp. 81-82)

⁵ (Khutbat-e-Mahmud, p. 421)

needed.”⁶

Also, unity of mankind inevitably highlights the Unity of Allah. As God is One, His Message is One. This message is conveyed to mankind via the channel of prophethood. When a believer accepts the prophet of his time, he also accepts the Unity of Allah. Khilafat is simply the extension of unified prophethood. Hence, the Khalifa’s mission is that of the prophets’ - to continue to unify mankind and declare the Unity of Allah. When one truly recognizes Khilafat, the Unity of Allah becomes apparent, as though no other avenue could have brought about the Universe. Hazrat Maulvi Nooruddin (ra), the 1st Khalifa of Ahmadiyyat, states, *“Take the example of the solar system. All planets are revolving around the sun. Nature tells us that it is inevitable to have a central leadership for any organization. Look at the life of the companions of the Holy Prophet (saw). They all marched forward in spiritual and worldly matters due to the central leadership. Look around today, we have the same Holy Quran. We have the translation and interpretation of the Holy Quran and above all, we have the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (saw). But despite all this Muslims are victims of all types of humiliation. This is all because of one reason and that is the lack of Amir (leader) whom everyone must obey.”*⁷

Rationale aside, the need for Khilafat can be demonstrated with the unfortunate success of the pornography industry. In 2006, worldwide sex industry sales surpassed \$97 billion. In contrast, Home Depot’s revenue for the same fiscal year was \$81.5 billion. At \$13.3 billion, 2006 revenues of pornography industry in America surpass the revenue of the NFL, NBA and MLB combined.⁸ This means that more than \$3,000 is spent on pornography every second. Perhaps even more disturbing is as recent as 2002, the U.S. Customs Service estimated 100,000+ child pornography websites existed worldwide.⁹

Furthermore, more than 4 million pornographic websites exist worldwide, comprising 12% of all websites. Sadly, the top search query is the word “sex,” searched more than “games,” “travel,” “music,” “jokes,” “cars,” “weather,” “health” and “jobs” combined.¹⁰ Muslims may object that the majority of people engaged in this behavior are not Muslim. Unfortunately, as recent as February 2007, Google Trends discovered that seven out of the top ten countries searching for the word “sex” on the Internet are Muslim countries. In order of viewing, they are: Pakistan, Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia.¹¹

Regarding alcohol consumption, a 2004 World Health Organization (WHO) report¹² stated that worldwide, alcohol is consumed by 2 billion people and is responsible for more than 3% of all deaths annually (1.8 million). At that time 76.3 million persons suffered from alcohol use disorders worldwide. It concluded, *“Overall there is a causal relationship between alcohol consumption and more than 60 types of disease and injury.”*

While the issue is alarming, what is even more striking is that almost the entire lot of countries with either a Muslim majority populace, or a significant minority populace all have failed to curb the consumption of alcohol. According to the 2004 WHO report, eighteen countries had a moderate level of alcohol consumption, many of which were marked as increasing: Afghanistan, Algeria, Brunei Darussalaam, Comoros, Djibouti, Guinea, Kazakhstan, Mali, Niger, Oman, Qatar, Senegal, Somalia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Togo, Yemen. Moreover, twenty eight countries had a significant level of alcohol consumption, rates that were either stable or increasing: Albania, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Maldives, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Saudi Arabia, Sudan,

⁶ http://www.alislam.org/library/khilafat_importance.html

⁷ (Hayat-e-Nur, pp. 643-644)

⁸ Internet Filter Review

⁹ Red Herring Magazine, 1/18/02

¹⁰ Alexa Research

¹¹ <http://www.google.com/trends?q=sex&ctab=1&geo=all&date=all>

¹² http://www.who.int/entity/stance_abuse/publications/globalstatusreportalcoholprofiles/en/index.html

Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan. Despite the fact that many of these countries have instituted severe penalties to curb alcohol consumption, only five countries with a Muslim majority had no noticeable level of alcohol consumption: Bahrain, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mauritania, Libya.

That obedience to Khilafat will exalt man spiritually is in accordance with the Holy Quran, **“Allah had promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them Successors (Khalifa) in the earth, as He made Successors from among those who were before them; and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will surely give them in exchange security and peace after their fear: They will worship Me, and they will not associate anything with Me. Then who so is ungrateful after that, they will be the rebellious”** (24:56). But where is the practical evidence of the benefits of Khilafat? Ahmadiyyat, under the auspices of Khilafat, has grown from a few hundred thousand members in 1908 to tens of millions in just under 100 years. 1,879 missions, 14,434 mosques, 64 translations of the Holy Quran, and 40+ hospitals established in 189 countries all provide testimony to the blessings of Khilafat. MTA International, a 24-hour a day free satellite service offers a variety of educational and religious programming. Additionally, through the “Africa Leap Forward Scheme,” Ahmadiyyat is running 505 public schools, offering free education to all willing sons and daughters of Africa.

Ultimately, Ahmadiyyat furnishes the proof that Khilafat is the cure for all the social maladies of today. Indeed the promise of God has been fulfilled with Ahmadiyyat. With the Khilafat Centenary approaching in May 2008, we close by requesting the reader to heed the prophetic words of the Promised Messiah (pbuh), *“According to the Holy Quran, till the end of time, you will continue to be blessed with spiritual life and material vision from God and the people of other religions and nations will receive this light from you and with this spiritual life and this material vision, which will empower you to invite others towards Islam. Such ability in you, in other words indeed called Khilafat.”*¹³