

Chapter

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HAZRAT MIRZA'S PLEA TO THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF INDIA

Hazrat Mirza abhorred the practice of declaring Muslims as infidels

The unity of Islam had been rent asunder by the cleric's practice of passing decrees of infidelity against Muslims. This practice was seriously compromising *Hazrat Mirza's* efforts to serve, defend and propagate Islam, and this greatly saddened him. *Hazrat Mirza* was constantly on the look-out for ways to settle doctrinal differences so that sectarian hatred and charges of infidelity may be put to an end before their dissensions totally destroyed the fabric of Islamic unity and stopped its propagation. Accordingly, *Hazrat Mirza* had suggested a framework for the resolution of differences on several occasions but it was not in the nature of the clerics to accept any judicious method for deciding between right and wrong.

An easy way to decide

On July 15, 1897, *Hazrat Mirza* issued an announcement under the title: "A Plea in the Name of God, the Glorious, to Religious Scholars, Saints and Righteous Persons of Punjab and India." This plea, which was addressed to all religious leaders of India, began with the following statement:

O, venerable men of religion and righteous servants of Allah! I present before you a petition in the name of Allah, the Most Glorious, and charge you with considering it for the sake of dispelling dissension and discord. You possess shrewdness and intel-

ligence and you act not merely out of conjecture but aided by a light from God. There was no need to invoke the name of Allah in a matter that all Muslims view sympathetically, and that is designed to remove a major dissension in Islam. However, there are some people who think that speaking the truth will incur the opprobrium of the general populace, but falsehood is a sin. They, therefore, prefer to stay silent as a matter of expediency. It is to get the attention of such people that it has become necessary to invoke the name of Allah.

Hazrat Mirza then provided evidence substantiating the claims he had made of being the *mujaddid* of the fourteenth century and the Promised Messiah. He went on to prove that Jesus had died, and then mentioned the signs manifested at his hands. After this, he proposed a method which could decide between truth and falsehood, and which would put an end to the present dissension. He wrote:

Therefore, I have conceived another idea to arrive at a definitive answer and I hope that God, the Most High, will bless it, and this dissension that has created so much strife and enmity among thousands of Muslims will be resolved. My suggestion is that all the religious scholars, saints, righteous and pure persons of Punjab and India be entreated in the name of God the Glorious to pray, supplicate and ask God for guidance about me and my claim. They should then publish under oath any revelations, visions and true dreams that they experience in response. If the majority of these experiences indicate that this humble person is a liar and fabricator, then by all means everyone can call me a reprobate, an accursed, a fabricator, a liar, and curse me as much as they want without the fear of sinning. In such a case, it will be incumbent on every honest person to shun me and this suggestion will make it easy for divine vengeance to befall my party and me.

However, if the majority of visions, revelations, and true dreams indicate that this humble person is from Allah, and is true in his claims, then it will be incumbent on every God-fearing person to follow me and abstain from calling us infidels and accusing us of falsehood. It is obvious that everyone has to die one day. Even if one has to bear some disgrace in accepting the truth in this world, it is better than being disgraced in the Hereafter.

Therefore, I call upon all religious scholars, saints, and righteous men of Punjab and India in the name of God, the Glorious – in whose name it is incumbent on all religious men to sacrifice even their lives – to supplicate about me to God for at least twenty-one days, that is if there is no indication before that. They should ask God to disclose to them who I am? Am I a liar or am I from Allah? I ask over and over again the venerable men of religion to supplicate in the name of Allah, the Glorious, for an end to this dissension and to continue their supplications for twenty-one days if no knowledge is given before that. I know for sure that to ignore a call made in the name of God is not the work of the righteous and I also know that all persons, pure of heart and fearing the Majesty of God, will focus on this matter because the plea invokes God's name.

After all the Divine evidence has been collected, the Divine verdict will be considered in favor of the side that has the preponderance of supporting evidence. If I am in reality a liar and an Antichrist then it is indeed a great misfortune of the Muslim nation that at a time of such need, and during such a stormy period of discord, religious innovations and dissensions, an Antichrist has been born at the head of the fourteenth century instead of a reformer (*Mujaddid*).

Let it be remembered that my announcement is addressed to every person who is considered to be righteous and pure-hearted by any group of discerning Muslims. Let it also be remembered that I do not consider righteous persons whose reputation is less well known to be in any way inferior because it is possible that they may be better in the eyes of Allah than those with famous reputations. In the same way, I do not consider chaste and pious women in any way inferior to men; it is possible that they may be better than some reputable and pious men. However, it will be incumbent on anyone who sends any dream, vision or revelation about me to do so under a signed statement of oath so that these documents can be collected and later published for the benefit of those who seek the truth. God willing, this suggestion will benefit many persons; the hearts of Muslims will rest easy after looking at the evidence and knowing the majority verdict; thus they will be able to rid themselves of this discord...Hence, O respected and vener-

able persons! Turn to God, the Knower of the unseen; I ask you in the name of Allah, the Glorious, to accept my plea, and I put you under the oath of the Most Powerful and the Most Glorious not to reject the petition of this humble person.

Regretfully, a slumbering nation, quite oblivious of its fate, was not likely to give any serious consideration to this equitable method of decision. Barring a few exceptions, there was no pain in the hearts of Muslims for the condition of Islam, no strong desire to remove dissension and no appreciation for the negative influence of passing decrees of infidelity. With such indifference, it was unlikely that people would give this proposal the attention it deserved, and this suggestion, too, turned out to be a cry in the wilderness. *Hazrat* Mirza expressed the indifference of the Muslim nation poignantly in the following verse of one of his poems:

They slumber wrapped in covers of indifference,
They wake not though we aroused them hundreds of times.