

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation,
and argue with people in the best manner.” (Holy Quran, 16:125)

The Light

AND

ISLAMIC REVIEW

**Exponent of Islam and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement
for over ninety years**

July – September 2016

In the spirit of the above-cited verse, this periodical attempts to dispel misunderstandings about the religion of Islam and endeavors to facilitate inter-faith dialogue based on reason and rationality.

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– Compiled by The Editor

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احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

◆ Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at Islam Lahore Inc., U.S.A. ◆

The Light was founded in 1921 as the organ of the AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) of Lahore, Pakistan. **The Islamic Review** was published in England from 1913 for over 50 years, and in the U.S.A. from 1980 to 1991. The present periodical represents the beliefs of the worldwide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

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The main objective of the A.A.I.L. is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world — Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by grave misconceptions and wrong popular notions.

Islam seeks to attract the **hearts and minds** of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning and the natural beauty of its principles.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

International: It recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

Peaceful: Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

Tolerant: Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practise any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

Rational: In all matters, it urges use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

Inspiring: Worship is not a ritual, but provides living contact with a Living God, Who answers prayers and speaks to His righteous servants even today as in the past.

Non-sectarian: Every person professing Islam by the words **La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur rasul-ullah** (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that **no** prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, **Mujaddids** will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

About ourselves

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore has branches in many countries including:

U.S.A.	Australia
U.K.	Canada
Holland	Fiji
Indonesia	Germany
Suriname	India
Trinidad	South Africa
Guyana	Philippines

Achievements:

The Anjuman has produced extensive literature on Islam, originally in English and Urdu, including translations of the Holy Quran with commentaries. These books are being translated into other languages, including French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic. The Anjuman has run several Muslim missions around the world, including the first ever in Western Europe.

History:

1889: **Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad** founds the Ahmadiyya Movement.

1901: Movement given name **Ahmadiyya** after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name **Ahmad**.

1905: Hazrat Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.

1908: Death of Hazrat Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.

1914: Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded at Lahore as continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.

1951: Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (d. 1981) becomes Head.

1981–1996: Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent medical doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution.

1996–2002: Prof. Dr Asghar Hameed, a distinguished retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, served as Head.

2002: Prof. Dr Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha elected Head.

The Caliphate and the Quran

An Introduction to the concept of Caliphate in Islam

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

[In August 2016, in conjunction with its annual convention in Columbus, Ohio, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society held a symposium attended by clergy, academics and members of the interfaith community titled “The True Significance of Islamic Caliphate”. Due to the rise of a so-called “Islamic State” in Iraq and Syria, the symposium intended to dispel the misperceptions commonly associated with the term “Caliphate” today. And this counter-narrative of the true significance of Islamic Caliphate, from authoritative Islamic sources, it was hoped would provide meaningful information to balance the dialogue on this popular yet very misunderstood topic. This article was delivered by the Editor, Secretary of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society, as the introductory presentation, and focused on how the term “Caliph” has been used in the Holy Quran.]

Introduction to the so-called Caliphate of ISIS

The focus of the symposium today will be on clarifying the concept of “Caliphate” in Islam, in contrast to the propaganda from extremists groups like ISIS. So, to start, briefly, who is ISIS and what do *they* believe? The origins of the group can be traced to *Al Qaeda in Iraq*. *Al Qaeda in Iraq* was formed in 2004 and headed by a man named Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. It became a major force in the insurgency in Iraq after the invasion of the country and the toppling of the dictator Sadaam Hussein. After al-Zarqawi’s death in 2006, *al Qaeda in Iraq* morphed into the new entity – the *Islamic State in Iraq* – and continued to lead the insurgency.

In 2010, a new leader emerged for the *Islamic State in Iraq*, a man named Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Although the *Islamic State in Iraq*’s operational capacity had become severely weakened after the U.S. troop surge in 2007, by 2013, al-Baghdadi managed to rebuild the *Islamic State in Iraq*’s capabilities to the point that it was carrying out *dozens* of attacks in Iraq every month. The group then expanded its operations by joining the rebellion against Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad. And this expansion into Syria led to al-Baghdadi’s announcement in April 2013 of the establishment of the *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria* – what we now know as ISIS.

By seizing large portions of northern and western Iraq and eastern Syria, and displacing more than a million people in the region, ISIS quickly attracted worldwide attention. It also gained notoriety for using brutal

tactics, including, abductions, slave trafficking, beheadings and mass killings. On June 29, 2014, al-Baghdadi declared the creation of a *new caliphate* and pronounced himself the *new caliph*, unilaterally claiming authority over the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims.

Appropriate Response to ISIS

Now, ISIS has been condemned by Muslims all over the world. Recently an international group of 120 Islamic scholars issued an open letter to ISIS, in which they argued against the extremist ideology that the group promotes. And not only do the overwhelming majority of Muslims around the world denounce ISIS, it is often an overlooked fact that 90% of ISIS’ victims are in fact Muslims. Some go so far as to argue that ISIS followers are not even Muslims and have nothing to do with Islam at all. Although such a sentiment can be appreciated – as it is unimaginable that such atrocities can be committed in the name of a religion, any religion for that matter – the response to ISIS must be more nuanced.

And what I mean by that, is that ISIS is indeed Islamic in the sense that they follow a very extreme *understanding* and *interpretation* of Islam. It is a perverted view of a spiritual faith, seen through the lens of fundamentalists who view religion as more to do with *power* and *control* than *morality* and *spiritual development*. In fact, ISIS relies heavily on theology to promote an apocalyptic world view, their goal actually being to orchestrate events to fulfill their interpretation of certain prophecies related to the end times.

Acknowledging the religious foundation of ISIS (as erroneous as it may be) is critical to defeating this menace. As is commonly understood, this battle against ISIS (and the war on terror in general) cannot be won in the battlefield alone; rather, the ideology upon which these groups base their cause must be addressed, discredited and ultimately exposed. This is what defeats their propaganda and halts their recruitment abilities. And this task, obviously, must be done by Muslims. At the core of ISIS’ ideology is the establishment of a civilization that *it believes to be reflective* of seventh-century Arabia, which includes a medieval view of political governance and norms of war. This, *they perceive*, to be a return to “pure” Islam. And central to this goal of theirs, is the *revival of the institution of the Caliphate*, which *according to them* every Muslim is duty-bound to pledge allegiance to, and is *in effect* a prerequisite to salvation.

The Quranic view on “Caliphs”

So, what is a Caliphate? What does the word “Caliph” mean and what does the Quran (the holy scripture of Islam) say about it? The word “Caliph” is derived from the Arabic root word “*khalafa*” and literally means “came after or succeeded”. It signifies a “successor”,

and entails being a *representative in a position of authority after another*. Several derivatives of this verb are found in various verses of the Quran. Generally, there appear to be three categories of ways in which the term “Caliph” has been used in the Quran.

Mankind as “Caliph”

The first is to refer to “**mankind**” as a whole. In 2:30 of the Quran, a conversation between God and the angels is relayed. It is, of course, an allegory and depicts the great status of mankind among all of creation. It states:

And when thy Lord said to the angels, I am going to place a ruler (a Caliph) in the earth, they (the angels) said: Wilt Thou place in it such as make mischief in it and shed blood? And we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness. He (God) said: Surely I know what you know not.

The verses following this exchange clarify that the lesson presented is that *despite man* having the capability of controlling the physical world, man’s true greatness lies in its ability to master his or her internal desires, something that is not readily apparent to an observer. This reference to mankind being a “Caliph” (or a ruling successor on earth) is indicative of the evolution of creation and mankind’s exalted and distinguished position in it.

Generations as “Caliph”

The second way in which the term “Caliph” is used, is to refer to “**generations of people**”. It signifies groups of people who succeeded the generation before them. And, in particular, it refers to a generation of people who came after those who were the subject of divine punishment due to their rejection of prophets and divine guidance. In this manner, the Quran makes reference to the “successors” (or Caliphs) to Noah’s people (7:69) and the “successors” (or Caliphs) to Ad (which was a tribe of people who rejected the Prophet Hud who was sent to them) (7:74).

An individual as “Caliph”

The third way in which the term “Caliph” is used, is to refer to “**an individual who succeeds another as a leader of people**”. And it is this use of the word “Caliph” that is most commonly known. An example of this use is found in the Quran with reference to the Prophet David as a “Caliph”; it states in 38:26:

O David, surely We have made thee a ruler (Caliph) in the land; so judge between men justly and follow not desire, lest it lead thee astray from the path of God.

Now, being a successor to King Saul (as leader of the Israelites), one can see how the term “Caliph” is applied to him. But the fact that David was a prophet as well, is

significant – it reveals the connection between *temporal rule* and *spiritual leadership*.

And this is made clear in another verse in the Quran; in 24:55, it states:

God has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will surely make them rulers (Caliphs) in the earth as He made those before them rulers (Caliphs) and that He will surely establish for them their religion ...

Here, a promise was given to the Muslim community, at a time when they were small, weak, severely persecuted and on the brink of extermination. The promise was that, those who would continue to sincerely believe in the divine message, and engage in good deeds by way of conduct, would not be annihilated, but rather would see their religion firmly established on earth (and ultimately prove to be a major civilizing force for humankind).

The “Rightly Guided Caliphs”

The first four successors to Prophet Muhammad – who Muslims refer to as *al Khulafa ar-Rashi-dun* (or the Rightly Guided Caliphs) – personify this type of Caliphate. These four individuals (who will be the subject of the keynote address by Dr. Malik) were righteous companions of Prophet Muhammad, who became leaders of the Muslim community, because of their following pure Islamic precepts and their adherence to the spirit of the faith. It was under their leadership that the young and fragile Muslim community continued to progress and did not simply disintegrate after Prophet Muhammad’s death. And, like David, the four Rightly Guided Caliphs were not simply temporal rulers, but moral leaders as well. In fact, it was because of their spiritual stature, that they were accepted as worthy of being in a leadership role.

After the Rightly Guided Caliphs, various kingdoms and empires and dynasties would appear among Muslim communities, and they referred to themselves as “Caliphates”. But – as with the other uses of the term caliphate – the true significance of an individual caliph lies in being a successor to Prophet Muhammad not necessarily in temporal rule but in the spiritual sphere. The famous French diplomat and historian Alexis de Tocqueville, once said of American democracy: “America is great because she is good. If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.” The same rationale applies to the concept of an *Islamic* Caliphate: “A Caliphate is *Islamic* because it is good. If a Caliphate ceases to be good, it will cease to be *Islamic*.”

The Spiritual Dispensation of “Caliphs”

Referring back to 24:55 of the Quran – it is promised that *caliphs* would be raised among the Muslim com-

munity, just as *caliphs* were raised among “those before them”. This reference to “*those before them*” refers to the Israelites, and in particular the succession of prophets in the Mosaic dispensation. So, aside from the raising of the Rightly Guided Caliphs – the first four successors to Prophet Muhammad, who would protect the Muslim community and guide it to be firmly established on earth – the promise contained in this verse further indicates the raising of saintly figures among the followers of Prophet Muhammad (as his spiritual successors), just as noble prophets were raised in succession to Prophet Moses, following the laws and guidance of the Mosaic order. **So, the true significance of Islamic Caliphate lies in “spiritual affinity” to the Prophet Muhammad, not simple political governance over a Muslim community.** It has less to do with *geographical territory on earth*, and more to do with *garnering tranquility in hearts*. A Caliph is to be less concerned with *controlling societies* and more concerned with *cultivating souls*. The true significance of a Caliphate is not dependent on an *Islamic State*, but rather on an *Islamic State of Being*.

And this understanding of the spiritual basis to an Islamic Caliphate (the true successors to Prophet Muhammad) will be discussed in more detail by Dr. Ahmad this afternoon. Which brings me to an end to my introduction. I thank you very much for your attention. ■

The Rightly Guided Caliphate

Examining the key characteristics of the first four successors to Prophet Muhammad

By Dr. Noman Malik

[In August 2016, in conjunction with its annual convention in Columbus, Ohio, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society held a symposium attended by clergy, academics and members of the interfaith community titled “The True Significance of Islamic Caliphate”. Due to the rise of a so-called “Islamic State” in Iraq and Syria, the symposium intended to dispel the misperceptions commonly associated with the term “Caliphate” today. And this counter-narrative of the true significance of Islamic Caliphate, from authoritative Islamic sources, it was hoped would provide meaningful information to balance the dialogue on this popular yet very misunderstood topic. This article was the keynote address and was delivered by Dr. Noman Malik, Treasurer of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society. In this article, the *Khulafa ar-Rashi-dun* (the first four successors to Prophet Muhammad, titled the “Rightly Guided

Caliphate”) are introduced – short biographies are presented, their relation to Prophet Muhammad are depicted, the circumstances under which they became leaders of the Muslim community are examined, and the manner in which they conducted their leadership roles are described.]

Succession to the Holy Prophet Muhammad

The Arabic word *Khalifa* (Caliph, in English) means successor. The term *Rightly Guided Caliphate* refers to the period of rule of four companions of the Holy Prophet who succeeded him as heads of state after his death in 632CE. These companions, in order of succession, were Hazrat Abu Bakr, Hazrat Umar, Hazrat Uthman and Hazrat Ali. Since then, many Muslim rulers, kingdoms and governments appeared among Muslims but they have not earned the designation “Rightly Guided”.¹ The distinguishing features these four caliphs’ rule was that it closely followed the form and conduct of the governance administered by the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Quranic values emphasizing fairness, equality, justice, accountability, honesty, charity, forgiveness, etc. characterized the rule of the first four Caliphs as it did that of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, making it deserving of the title *Rightly Guided*.

The Prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad extended over a period of 23 years. Before his death in 632 A.D, he was not only the acknowledged spiritual leader, but also the ruler of Arabia. In this way he was a prophet “like unto Moses” being both a spiritual leader and a temporal ruler and a law-giver. And his role was to deliver the message of the Holy Quran and to put its guidance into practice so that mankind may attain to spiritual perfection by following his example, as is underscored in the following verse:

Certainly you have in the Messenger of God an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in God and the Latter Day, and remembers God much. (33:21)

The designation of the Holy Prophet as the *Perfect Exemplar* is very apt, as he passed through all possible varying conditions of life: from a helpless orphan, to successful merchant, to a persecuted prophet, to a temporal leader fighting in the self-defense of his tiny band of followers, to a victorious general, to a spiritual leader accepted by all, and to a ruler of a large country.

He was known as *Al-Amin* (The faithful and the Truthful) before he became a prophet, and remained so till the very end. As Bosworth Smith remarks in his book *Mohammed and Mohammadanism*:

In the shepherd of the desert, in the Syrian trader, in the solitary of Mount Hira, in the reformer in the minority of one, in the exile of Medina, in the

acknowledged conqueror, in the equal of the Persian Chosroes and the Greek Heraclius, we can still trace a substantial unity. I doubt whether any other man, whose external conditions changed so much, ever himself changed less to meet them: the accidents are changed, the essence seems to me to be the same in all.

By faithfully following the guidance of the Holy Quran, the scripture revealed to him over the 23 years of his prophethood, the Holy Prophet Muhammad demonstrated how belief in God and service of humanity should be practiced in all these varied circumstances and situations. Thus, by the edifying message of the holy Quran, and his sterling conduct, he was successful in transforming a nation steeped in ignorance and divided into warring tribes engaged for centuries in blood feuds, into a brotherhood based on justice and humanity. For this he has been called “The most successful of the religious personalities” in the Encyclopedia Britannica.

From this very society would be produced the first four leaders known as the *Rightly Guided Caliphs* who would lead the Muslim nation in the perilous times after the demise of the Holy Prophet, because they faithfully reflected his virtues in their personal lives and affairs of state.

Introducing the Rightly Guided Caliphs

In order of succession, the Rightly Guided Caliphs (or successors) were:

- Hazrat Abu Bakr (632AD - 634 AD)
- Hazrat Umar (634 AD - 644 AD)
- Hazrat Uthman (644 AD - 656 AD)
- Hazrat Ali (656AD – 661 AD)

Muslims are well acquainted with the names and the lives of these persons, but for those who are not familiar with them and with Muslim history, I will say provide a brief introduction.

Hazrat Abu Bakr

Hazrat Abu Bakr was perhaps the closest companion of the Holy Prophet. He was only a couple of years younger than the Holy Prophet and had known him from childhood. Like the Holy Prophet, he had never touched wine or alcohol even before his conversion to Islam. He came from the *Bani Taim* clan of the *Quraish* who were known for their sense of justice and fairness, and were frequently asked to arbitrate in matters involving blood wit. Similar to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, he was known for his sagacity, honesty, wisdom and care for the weak and the oppressed. Prior to Prophet Muhammad’s call to prophethood, he joined the Holy Prophet in the league set up by him to champion the rights of the oppressed particularly widows and orphans

Unlike the Holy Prophet, though, he was literate and an expert in genealogy and Arabic poetry. As regards to his conviction and faith in the Holy Prophet, a historian like Sir William Muir advances Hazrat Abubakr as an example in an argument in support of the Prophet’s sincerity: “Had Muhammad begun his career as a conscious impostor, he never could have won the faith and friendship of a man who was not only sagacious and wise, but throughout his life simple, consistent and sincere.”

Hazrat Umar

Hazrat Umar was also a close and highly trusted companion of the Holy Prophet during his prophethood. He came from the clan of *Adiyy*, which had the important distinction of supplying envoys to the *Quraish*. He was also a successful merchant, a highly skilled soldier and a great orator. In the beginning, not having access to the Holy Quran or knowing the Holy Prophet well, he resolved one day to end the life of the Prophet, and thereby also put an end to the disruption that Islam was causing to the Meccan society by calling for justice. On the way, events transpired whereby he read some verses of the Holy Quran which caused a complete change in his understanding of the message being delivered by the Holy Prophet. With this transformation, he went directly to meet with the Holy Prophet and announced his acceptance of Islam. With the backing of Hazrat Umar, Muslims began to pray openly in the Kaaba. Once in a time of famine, he personally delivered sacks of flour to the starving populace. When someone offered to help him carry the sack, he replied: “You may carry my burden for me in this world, but who will carry my burden on the day of Judgement?”

Hazrat Uthman

Hazrat Uthman belonged to the influential *Umayya* clan, which was the custodian of the national flag of the *Quraish*. He was about six years younger than the Holy Prophet and embraced Islam in the early Meccan period. For this he was severely persecuted by his clan, which was exceptionally hostile to the Holy Prophet. He was also related to the Holy Prophet by way of marrying his daughter, Hazrat Ruqayya. He was a wealthy merchant, but after accepting Islam made substantial monetary contributions to support the young and fragile Muslim community whenever needed. He was trusted by the Holy Prophet for not only his skills but also for his devotion. And illustration of this is shown by the Holy Prophet appointing Hazrat Uthman as the chief negotiator for the famous Truce of Hudaibiyya (in which peace was agreed upon for a period of ten years between the Muslims and the Meccans).

Hazrat Ali

Hazrat Ali belonged to the *Banu Hashim*, the same clan as the Holy Prophet. He was the Holy Prophet’s cousin.

His father, Abu Talib, reared the Holy Prophet after the death of the Holy Prophet's grandfather, Abu Muttalib. Though he was very young, about 10 years old, he was among the first people to accept the religion of Islam. Once the Holy Prophet invited his kinsman to a feast to introduce Islam to them. After dinner, he spoke about Islam and addressed them with the words "Who of you will step forward to pledge allegiance to me and become my friend and brother?" All remained silent except for the youth Ali who replied in the affirmative. He repeated the exhortation thrice and each time it was Ali alone who responded each time. And a friend and helper he did become. He together with the Holy prophet and the other companions patiently bore the persecution in Mecca for thirteen long years. Later when the Muslim community migrated to Medina he fought in the defensive battles which the Muslims had to fight for their very survival against the powerful Meccan Quraish and their allies. He would prove his prowess as warrior and leader in these battles. In addition to his martial exploits he was also well known as a great exponent of the Holy Quran, and the companions of the prophet would frequently seek his advice in the interpretation and application of the Quran in various situations.

Companionship with Holy Prophet

These men had known the Holy Prophet from the earliest of times, when he had declared his mission as prophet in Mecca. And in the case of Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Ali, even before that. They had resolutely stood by him through all trials and tribulations he had to undergo as prophet. During this period, they had been thoroughly purified by the sublime message of the Quran and the inspiring example of the Prophet. Hazrat Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman had been rich and successful businessmen before embracing Islam. But after their conversion they spent all their wealth in taking care of the poor and in service of the Islam. The section on "Muhammad" in the Encyclopedia Britannica confirms the excellent morals of these companions:

... a mass of detail in the early sources show that he was an honest and upright man who had gained the respect and loyalty of others who were like-wise honest and upright men." Encyclopedia Britannica.

When called to shoulder the responsibilities of the new state, they would project the same sense of integrity, justice, sincerity and faith as their beloved master and teacher, the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The odds they faced were immense. During their tenure as Caliphs, the nascent Muslim state successfully fended off attacks by the two most powerful empires of the day, the Roman and the Persian, and overcame them both.

The conquest of both these Empires, spectacular as it was, was, however, not the distinguishing characteristic of this period. The distinguishing characteristic of this period lay in the establishment of a truly novel and revolutionary society which was based on the equality and brotherhood of mankind as espoused in the Holy Quran. The Prophet, by his example, had shown the mode and spirit in which these Quranic teachings were to be applied over a period of twenty three years of his prophethood in all the different circumstances the Muslims had to face. In other words, the Holy Quran and the example of the holy Prophet served as the constitution of this new society.

Distinguishing Features of the Rightly Guided Caliphate

The important distinguishing features of the rule and administration of these four successors of the prophet (which reflected the great spiritual and moral change produced in them by the Holy Quran and the example of the Holy Prophet) included the following:..

- Democratic Governance
- Establishment of Religious Freedom
- Establishment of Gender Equality
- Establishment of a Welfare System
- Institution of Universal Education
- Implementing Just Rules of War

1. Democratic Governance

Perhaps the most important distinguishing feature of this new society was the democratic governing system of the new State. The practical application of these democratic principles had been demonstrated by the Holy Prophet himself in the agreement to govern Madina (Yathrib) in the early years of Muslim presence in the city. The agreement, also known as the *Constitution of Madina*, was made between the various factions in Madina, namely the Muslims, the pagans and the Jewish tribes. In the Agreement, the Holy Prophet Muhammad was chosen by the parties concerned to be the ruler of Madina. He did not use armed force to seize this position. All parties were guaranteed freedom of religion and were bound to a common defense against aggressors. Fighting and bloodshed in Madina were forbidden.

The governing system would be based on democratic principles, as mandated in the Holy Quran:

Those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer and their government is by counsel among themselves. (42:38)

God commands you to make over trusts to those worthy of them, and that when you judge between people, you judge with justice. (4:58)

Democratic Elections of the Caliphs

Hereditary kingship and the divine right of kings to rule and be obeyed was abolished. The state would not be run as a personal fief subject to the whims of an autocratic ruler, but rather the leader would be chosen by the people in accordance with the following Quranic verse:

... make your trust over to them who are worthy of them (4:58).

Hazrat Abu Bakr's election was the first real test for the new Muslim nation after the passing away of the Holy Prophet in 632 AD. The Holy Prophet did not specifically designate a successor. Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Umar were with the prophet's body after he had died. They were informed that the *Ansar* were holding a meeting in which they were on the verge of choosing a certain person from among themselves as leader. They hurriedly went to the meeting place where the leading candidate had just finished addressing the Assembly. Both Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Umar made speeches in which they emphasized the reasons why Hazrat Abu Bakr would be the best choice as a leader, not least of them being that the independent minded desert tribes would only accept a Quraishite as their leader. After a round of arguments and counter arguments, they succeeded in convincing the assembly that Hazrat Abu Bakr was the best choice, and all the people present in the assembly swore allegiance to him as leader, one by one. No fighting or altercations took place during the proceedings. This was a remarkable illustration of candidates presenting their views to the citizenry and an election of head of state being achieved by popular vote.

When Hazrat Abu Bakr was on his death bed, he consulted with all the important companions of the Holy Prophet (who were representatives of the people) about his successor and the majority choice fell on Hazrat Umar.

Likewise when Hazrat Umar was on his deathbed, he appointed a committee of six prominent and respected companions of the Holy Prophet to choose a leader to replace him. The committee included Hazrat Uthman and Hazrat Ali, the subsequent third and fourth rightly guided caliphs. Hazrat Uthman voted for Hazrat Ali and Hazrat Ali for Hazrat Uthman, thus showing that none of them were hungry for power. In addition, Abdur Rahman bin Auf, who was appointed as chairman of the committee, consulted about the choice of a leader with numerous other important persons who had gathered for the annual pilgrimage. The final choice was Hazrat Uthman by majority opinion.

Hazrat Ali, similarly, was elected Caliph after the death of Hazrat Uthman. The election was marred to some degree by events following the assassination of

Hazrat Uthman, but the rule of Hazrat Ali was characterized by the same personal honesty, humility, justice and sense of service to the people as his predecessors.

All four caliphs were elected to their leadership positions. None of them were blood relations of each other and none of them actively sought the office of ruler. Hazrat Abu Bakr was elected by popular vote after an open discussion on the merits of the candidates, and Hazrat Umar, Hazrat Uthman and Hazrat Ali were elected by representative committees. In the election of each of these individuals, the key principle of consultation with and by the permission of the governed was preserved. These elections were all the more remarkable, as they took place in the seventh century, an era in which hereditary kingship was the norm with rulers frequently wresting kingship by the force of arms. Peaceful election of a ruler on the basis of merit was a completely novel idea and it demonstrated the revolutionary change produced in the early Muslims by the Quranic teachings and the Holy Prophet's example.

Head of State subordinate to will of the people

Besides initiating democratic election as the manner in which to choose a leader, and abolishing hereditary kingship, an equally momentous reform instituted by the Rightly Guided Caliphs was that of subordinating the position of the ruler to the will of the people. And this was done by Hazrat Abu Bakr in a speech delivered immediately after his election. In this speech, he expounded on the essentials of democratic governance of the Muslim State. He began his address by declaring that he had no desire to be elected Caliph, but had accepted the responsibility of the office only in obedience to the will of the community. Then, in simple short sentences, he laid out the principles of Islamic rulership. "*Help me,*" said the Caliph, "*if I am in the right. Set me right if I am in the wrong!*" He then continued with another brief statement in which he described the main function of a government, viz., the preservation of peace and order and safeguarding the rights of citizens, i.e. peace and justice for all: "*The weak among you shall be strong in my eyes till I have vindicated his just rights, and the strong among you shall be weak in my eyes till I have made him fulfil the obligations due from him.*" And he concluded with the telling words: "*Obey me as long as I obey God and His Prophet. In case I disobey God and His Prophet, I have no right to obedience from you.*"

Accordingly, he laid down as the very corner-stone of government that all power ultimately vested in the people themselves. But it was a right with attendant responsibilities, as indicated in the verses of the Holy Quran, that the populace should be *true to their trusts*. That is, there should be no rebellion or insurrection if

the requirements of a just government were being met, but that the people would have the right to remove an incompetent or an unjust ruler.

Institution of Rule of Law

An importance aspect of Islamic democratic governance was the institution of the rule of law. The caliphs would have the same rights and responsibilities as any other citizen and would not receive any special privileges. They were not masters but custodians of the public treasury. The caliphs were placed on meagre salaries, which in the case of Hazrat Abu Bakr was a paltry 500 dinars per month. Even this, he gave away in charity. The same was the case with the other three caliphs. Hazrat Uthman, who was wealthier than the other Caliphs, returned his salary to the Public Treasury. Prior to accepting Islam, Hazrat Abu Bakr, Hazrat Umar and Hazrat Uthman had been wealthy businessmen, but after becoming Muslims they gave away whatever they earned to the poor and to the needs of the Muslim state.

After becoming Caliphs they did not enrich themselves. They were masters of two empires but they did not take advantage of this position for their personal benefit. On the contrary, they were extremely scrupulous about taking any money from the government. Once Hazrat Umar needed some honey for an ailment, but he refused to take any money from the treasury unless it was sanctioned by the committee in charge of the Treasury.

The Caliphs also led simple lives. These masters of the two greatest empires of the world were oblivious to all the wealth around them. They did not build any palaces for themselves. Like ordinary people, they would walk daily from their modest homes to the Mosque for their five daily prayers. They wore simple, clean, coarse clothing which, especially in the case of Hazrat Umar, was covered with patches. They had no guards posted outside their doors and anyone was free to approach them. They had no regard for their personal safety and refused body guards. The governors who were appointed by them were held to the same high standards. Once when Hazrat Umar heard that the Governor of Syria had posted a guard outside his door, he angrily ordered him to have the guard removed.

Hazrat Abu Bakr is recorded as going to Town Halls and asking people to air their grievances so he could attend to them personally. The Ruler could be sued in the court by citizens whether they be Muslim or non-Muslim. In one such case Hazrat Umar had to appear in the court of Zaid ibn Thabit, a venerated companion of the Holy Prophet. On noticing that Hazrat Zaid was being deferential to him out of respect because he was the Caliph, Hazrat Umar admonished him saying that it compromised the impartiality of Zaid as judge.

Democratic Organizational Structure

A democratic organizational structure was also established. The democratic governance based on the guidance of the Quran and the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad was continued in the administration of Hazrat Abu Bakr, and found full expression in the rulership of the latter three Caliphs. Two consultative bodies were established during the time of Hazrat Umar. A larger body for taking major decisions regarding the affairs of state, and a smaller body for managing everyday business. Members of these bodies included representatives from the capital, outlying areas and non-Muslim subjects such as the Parsi or Magian Chiefs, and the Muquaqs of Egypt. A Christian Copt was invited to Medina to represent Egypt. Commissions were convened to hear complaints of citizens. If the complaints about an official (including governors) were valid, the official was relieved of his post. Even some famous companions of the Prophet were removed from their posts in some instances, not for any serious infractions, but just because it was felt that people had lost confidence in them.

2. Establishing Religious Freedom

The successors of the Holy Prophet faithfully followed the Quranic prescription commanding there be “no compulsion in religion” in the treatment of Non-Muslim communities like the Christians of Najran and the Zoroastrians of Persia. Non-Muslim subjects had the same rights as Muslims. If a Muslim was found guilty of violating the rights of a non-Muslim, the Muslim was punished accordingly. Non-Muslims were guaranteed the right to maintain worship places and practice their religion without hindrance. Funds were even disbursed by the government for the maintenance of their worship places.

The acceptance of the surrender of Jerusalem by Hazrat Umar speaks volumes about the treatment of Non-Muslims by the Rightly Guided Caliphs. When the Caesar fled Syria for Constantinople after the defeat of the Roman Army at Yarmuk, the Bishop of Jerusalem said that he would only surrender Jerusalem if the Caliph Umar would accept the surrender in person. So Umar set out for Jerusalem accompanied only by a couple of servants and a single camel. The servants and Caliph Umar would take turns in riding the camel. There was no armed guard or army detachment accompanying the group. When the group reached Jerusalem, the delegation waiting to receive the Caliph rushed to the rider of the camel who happened to be the servant and seemed to be better dressed than the Caliph in his patched clothing leading the camel. The Caliph Umar expressed his strong displeasure at some of the Muslim Commanders who were wearing fine clothes received in

the booty. When they suggested he should perhaps wear clothes more fit for a king, he replied gruffly that a Muslim's dignity lay elsewhere than in his dress.

The meeting with the Bishop was another matter. They both conversed amicably and had lunch, and the Bishop himself repaired a patch in Hazrat Umar's cloak and later took Hazrat Umar on a tour of Jerusalem. When the time for prayer came, they were in the Church of Resurrection, and the Bishop offered that Hazrat Umar could pray in the church. Hazrat Umar thanked him, but kindly refused, saying that he was afraid that if he prayed in the church, later Muslims may try to convert it into a mosque citing the fact that Umar had prayed there. It would be difficult to find such scrupulous regard for protection of religious rights in the annals of history.

The treaty which was drawn up and signed on 15 AH by the generals Khalid bin Walid and Abu Ubaida and the Governor of Syria Hazrat Muawiya read as follows:

This is the covenant of peace which 'Umar, the servant of God and the commander of the faithful, has made with the people of Jerusalem. This peace which is vouchsafed to them, guarantees them protection of life, of property, of churches, of crosses, of those who set up, display and honor these crosses. Their churches shall not be used as dwelling houses, nor shall they be dismantled, nor shall they or their compounds, their crosses and their belongings be in any way damaged. They shall be subjected to no compulsion in matters of faith, nor shall they be in any way molested...

This treaty and all other treaties made with non-Muslim communities, such as the Zoroastrians, were modelled on the treaties made in the time of the Holy Prophet with the Christians of Najran.

The rule of the Rightly Guided Caliphate was marked by exemplary moderation and magnanimity, so much so that in Syria the Christian population preferred Muslim rule to that of their own co-religionists, the Romans, while the fire-worshipping population of Persia looked upon the Muslims as their deliverers from the yoke of their own kith and kin. Sir William Muir a historian of Islam writes to this effect in his book, the Early Caliphate:

The people of Syria, too, apart from the religious persecution to which they had been subjected, suffered from increased taxation, and in consequence remained passive spectators of the invasion of their country, hoping more, indeed, from an occupation by the Arabs, who abstained from pillage, and whose rule was mild and tolerant, than from the continuance of the status quo.

A letter from the Nestorian Patriarch Isho Yahb III (A.D. 650-660) speaks for itself on this point:

The Arabs to whom God has given at this time the government of the world, do not persecute the Christian religion ; on the contrary, they favour it, honour our priests and saints of the Lord, and confer benefits on churches and monasteries .

3. Establishing Gender Equality

The rights guaranteed to women in the Holy Quran and applied by the Holy Prophet were unknown before this time in history, and were vigorously enforced in the Righteous Caliphate. These included a woman's right to work, the right to her earnings, (i.e. equal pay for equal work), the right to inheritance, the right to divorce, and the right to participate in political activity and matters of State. As a result, women played a prominent role in the Rightly Guided Caliphate. Hazrat Ayesha, the wife of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, was a great teacher of Hadith and the Quran. She was not only a transmitter of the sayings and practice of the Holy Prophet but also well versed in deductive reasoning in the Hadith and the Holy Quran. A considerable amount of Islamic law is based on Hadith based on reports by Hazrat Ayesha. Elder companions of the Holy Prophet, including the Rightly Guided Caliphs, used to seek her advice on important matters.

Similarly, a woman was appointed to the important position of the Supervisor of the market in Medina in the time of Hazrat Umar. During the reign of Umar women actually enlisted and went to the theatre of war to tend the wounded, dress their wounds and do other relief work. Women were also free to attend lectures, sermons and similar functions. Once when Hazrat Umar delivered a sermon against the practice of settling large sums as dower money, it was a woman who stood up and objected, saying: "O son of Khataab! How dare you deprive us when God says in the Qur'an that even a heap of gold may be settled on the wife as dower?" Far from resenting her intrusion and losing his temper, Hazrat Umar appreciated her courage of conviction and complimented her replying meekly: "The women of Medina have more understanding of the Quran than Umar." In short, in addition to the requirements of their household functions, women were seen side by side with men in almost every walk of life.

4. Establishing a Welfare System

Poor Houses were established by Hazrat Umar, and were equally open to both Muslims and non-Muslims. Similarly Old-Age pensions and pensions to widows and others deserving of *zakat* (charity) was instituted by Hazrat Umar. These pensions were awarded to both Muslims and Non-Muslims. Public projects such as building canals, caravansaries, prisons, etc. were also instituted.

5. *Institution of Universal Education*

When the Caliph Umar made education compulsory in Arabia, he made it so for both boys and girls. This regard for knowledge is present in a prayer of the Holy Quran: “My lord increase me in knowledge”. The Holy Prophet, though unlettered himself, had a great love for acquiring knowledge. One of the conditions for freeing the prisoners of war after the battle of Badr was that they should teach a number of children to read and write. Other sayings of the prophet extolling the virtues of striving for knowledge are:

The ink of the scholar is more precious than the blood of the Martyr.

Seek knowledge even if you have to go to China.

This desire for acquiring knowledge would be a key factor in producing the brilliant Islamic civilization which would develop over the next hundred years and would contribute to the development of modern civil society.

6. *Implementing Just Rules of War*

The defeat and conquest of both the Roman and Persian Empires in the period of the early caliphate in about twenty years is indeed spectacular and stunning. Before investigating the reasons for the wars with the Roman and Persian empires one has to examine what the Holy Quran has to say about war.

War Permitted Only in Self-Defense

The Holy Quran allows only defensive war. Aggressive war is positively forbidden:

Permission (to fight) is given to those on whom war is made, because they are oppressed. And surely God is able to assist them — Those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is God. And if God did not repel some people by others, cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which God's name is much remembered, would have been pulled down. And surely God will help him who helps Him. Surely God is Strong, Mighty. (22:39-40)

And fight in the way of God against those who fight against you, but be not aggressive. Surely God loves not the aggressors. (2:190)

The Holy Prophet strictly followed the Quranic injunctions and all his battles were waged to prevent annihilation of the Muslim community by the attacking Quraish and their allies.

Roman and Persian supported insurrections

Various theories have been advanced for the clash with the Roman and Persian Empires and their conquest.

Some historians allege the invasion was for plunder and loot, others say it was instigated by religious zeal to convert non-Muslims. Even early Muslim historians, who were essentially chroniclers, recorded the battles and their outcomes, but did not analyze reason for the wars. In this regard, we are greatly indebted to Maulana Muhammad Ali, who in his book *The Early Caliphate* presents a masterful analysis of the events leading to the clash of the Early Caliphate with the Romans and the Persians. His well-researched and supported analysis clearly demonstrates that the wars of the Early Caliphate were defensive in nature.

Both the Romans and the Persians considered the Arabs as barbaric and inferior peoples who were militarily no match for them. The Ghassanid tribes in southern Syria on the north-western border of Arabia were the vassals of the Romans, and the North Eastern Lakhmid tribes in Mesopotamia were the vassals of the Persians. Yemen was under direct Persian rule. The Roman and Persian Empires, though not unduly worried, had begun to view the rise of Islam under the Holy Prophet in Arabia as a potential threat. When Yemen accepted Islam and overthrew the Persian yoke, the Persian emperor sent only two soldiers to Medina to arrest the Holy Prophet which showed the contempt in which they held the Arabs. The Prophet himself undertook an expedition to Tabuk on the Roman frontier in the last year of his Prophethood when he received intelligence that the Romans were massing for an attack, but returned without attacking when no Roman army was encountered, thus following the Quranic directive forbidding aggressive war.

The Arab tribes were addicted to raiding each other for loot and plunder with resulting loss of life and property. When the Muslim state was established, these depredations could not be tolerated and treaties were signed with various tribes wherein the Muslims pledged to refrain from this behavior. Notwithstanding, breach of the treaties by the other tribes was common and this elicited a response from the Muslims to enforce the terms of the treaties. As these tribes on the frontier were vassals of the Romans and Persians, this led to clashes with the two empires

Also, immediately after the death of the Holy Prophet in 632 A.D. a wave of rebellion spread across Arabia, and some of the tribes that had accepted Islam apostatized and reverted to their old ways. Others refused to pay the zakat tax for charity which is compulsory for all Muslims. Certain tribes broke the treaties they had signed with the Muslims and rebelled against the central authority. False prophets arose in the peripheral regions of Arabia and marched into Central Arabia. Many of these insurrections were instigated and sup-

ported by the Romans and the Persians who viewed the rise of the Muslim state as a threat. This attitude of both these empires was the prime cause for hostilities, as reported by Sir William Muir in his book *Early Caliphate*:

No sooner was apostasy put down than, first in Chaldea (Southern Mesopotemia) and then in Syria, collision with wild border tribes kindled the fire of foreign war.

*Chaldea and southern Syria belong properly to Arabia. The tribes inhabiting this region, partly heathen but chiefly (at least in name) Christian, formed an integral part of the Arab race and as such fell within the immediate scope of the New Dispensation. When, however, these came into collision with the Muslim columns on the frontier, they were supported by their respective sovereigns, — the western by the Kaisar (Caesar), and the eastern by the Chosroes. Thus the struggle widened, and Islam was brought presently face to face in mortal conflict with the two great powers of the East and of the West.” - Sir William Muir, *Early Caliphate*.*

What unfolded next was perhaps one of the most amazing conquests in history, in which a small and insignificant nation defeated two of world’s mightiest empires (the Roman and Persian empires) simultaneously in a period of 13 years. The weakness of the Muslim forces also militates against their ability at launching an aggressive war against the Roman and the Persian Empires. At the start of hostilities, the Caliphate was recovering from an insurrection which had been abetted and supported by the Romans and the Persians. The weakness of the Muslim forces was further compounded by the fact that the Arabs had for hundreds of years been in awe of the military prowess of these two empires which vastly outmatched the Muslims in numbers, organization, implements of war and resources. Once when a rider from the Syrian frontier galloped into Medina, Hazrat Umar asked him: “Have the Ghassanides/Romans come?” Tellingly, this is hardly the question of a conquering general.

Improper motives negated by the facts

Nor was it the love for loot and plunder which motivated the Muslims. To attack simultaneously the two most powerful empires in the world was akin to committing suicide, and only an insane person would suggest such a move. The tribes which had taken part in the insurrection in the first year of the Caliphate were actually barred by Hazrat Abu Bakr from taking part in the war, thereby disproving the allegation that the Muslims fought to placate these tribes by providing them opportunities for loot and plunder.

The chroniclers of that time have given ample details of the campaigns, but have not recorded a single instance where the opposing army or a town under siege had been given the option of Islam or the sword. In fact Christian Arab tribes fought with the Muslims against the Romans and Persians and sometimes formed a significant part of the Muslim army. The generous treaties signed with the defeated populace and the protection of their places of worship completely disproves the theory that Islam was forced on them.

The desire of the Muslims to end the war is also evidenced by the fact that peace was offered several times by the Muslims during the course of the war, on the terms that the enemy should acknowledge defeat and pay them tribute. But they were rebuffed each time by the Romans and the Persians who could not believe that they were losing to what they considered as an inferior and barbaric people. These offers of peace also disproves the theory that the Muslims were waging unrelenting war to convert people to Islam.

Reluctance of Hazrat Umar to extend the conquests

One of the strongest proofs that the Caliphate wars were defensive are the statements of Hazrat Umar expressing his reluctance to extend the war beyond the area of Arab settlements in Mesopotamia. He expressed this in the following words:

I wish between ourselves and Persia there were a mountain of fire.

I desire that between Mesopotamia and the countries beyond, the hills shall be a barrier so that the Persians shall not be able to get at us, nor we at them. The plain of al-Iraq are sufficient for our wants. I would prefer the safety of my people to thousands of spoils and further conquest.

The Persians however would not accept their defeat and would attack the Muslims again and again. This necessitated further expansion into Persia to put an end to this constant danger, as Sir William Muir states in *The Early Caliphate*:

The truth began to dawn on Umar that necessity was laid upon him to withdraw the ban against advance. In self-defence, nothing was left but to crush the Chosroes and to take entire possession of his realm.

He was compelled at last by the warlike attitude of the Persian court to bid his armies take the field with the avowed object of dealing the empire a final blow.

The Crucial Battles

Multiple battles were fought with the Persians and Romans in which the Muslims were heavily outnumbered.

bered. The two battles which finally broke the back of the Roman and Persian armies were the battle of Yarmuk in Syria – in which a force of forty thousand Muslims defeated a two hundred thousand strong Roman army – and the battle of Qadsiyah – in which a thirty thousand Muslim force defeated a one hundred and twenty thousand strong Persian army. The famous general and commander of the Persian army, Rustam, was killed in the battle of Qadisiyah, and Heraclius, the Roman Ceaser, left Syria for Constantinople on hearing of the defeat at Yarmuk. The Persians suffered defeat after defeat and finally the Chosroes was slain by his own subjects in the furthest Eastern reaches of the Empire during the time of Hazrat Uthman.

The case was the same on the Northern and Western front. No attempt was made to extend the conquests into Asia Minor or Egypt. However, the Caesar had launched several attacks via sea from the port of Alexandria with armies in excess of 100,000 men and a whole intact Roman army had withdrawn into Egypt. If this threat was not nipped in the bud the Muslims would not be able to withstand another united attack. Hazrat Umar again resisted expanding the war, but the Muslim commanders finally succeeding in persuading Hazrat Umar of the necessity of terminating this danger by occupying Egypt and the port of Alexandria. A small army of five thousand men under Amar bin As invaded Egypt and defeated a much larger Roman Army and captured Alexandria, thus ending the immediate danger from that quarter. Attacks on the Muslim state by the Roman armies numbering sometimes more than 100,000 would however still continue into the Caliphate of Hazrat Uthman.

Conduct of war exhibited by Muslim army

One can cite many instances of incredible acts of courage, bravery and sacrifice performed by Muslim soldiers in these battles, but the one feature which truly distinguishes the Muslim army from other armies in the annals of history is their humane conduct during and after battle. The rules which they followed were the same as were issued by the Holy Prophet when he had to engage in defensive warfare during the last eight years of his prophethood. These rules included:

- No elderly man, child or woman is to be killed.
- No non-combatants are to be killed on the battlefield even if they are in the service of the enemy.
- No monks are to be abused, nor places of worship damaged.
- Bodies of the fallen are not to be mutilated or disfigured.
- No fruit-bearing tree is to be cut down or crops burnt.

- No dwellings are to be destroyed.
- Terms of a treaty with the opponent group are to be upheld and honored under all circumstances.
- Opponents who surrender are entitled to all the rights and privileges of a citizen in the Muslim State.

It is this magnanimous treatment which won over the defeated soldiers and populace to Islam. When these individual Muslim soldiers and Muslim commanders spoke to them about Islam and its pure and simple teachings which had cleansed them of their former sins and transformed them into a brotherhood of equality, the defeated soldiers and populace who had already been impressed by their kindness, sincerity and truthfulness were inclined to accept the new faith.

Conclusion

During the closing years of Hazrat Uthman's reign, a movement began mainly among the Bedouin tribes claiming they were being unfairly treated. The leader of this movement was a Yemenite who had accepted Islam in the eighth year of Hazrat Uthman's reign. The Bedouin tribes who came under his influence had only recently embraced Islam and were not fully acquainted with the faith. They succeeded in killing Hazrat Uthman in Madina by subterfuge. And later, they accomplished the same with Hazrat Ali.

With the death of Hazrat Ali came also the death of democratic election of rulers. To quote Maulana Muhammad Ali from the Early Caliphate:

In subordinating kingship to the law of the land, and the law of the land to the will of the people, Abu Bakr laid the foundations of a truly democratic government as also of liberty and equality in the truest sense of these words. To the misfortune of the community of Islam, however, this golden rule of government was abandoned after the reign of 'Ali, the fourth Caliph. Kingship again became private property, as also did the public treasury. Democracy gave way to despotism, and thus began the disintegration and decay of the power of Islam.

The political and religious expansion of the Muslim community would continue and Islam would become the dominant religion of the Empire. Many of the institutions promoting public good and education would continue, but a united cohesive nation based on democratic principles, the only principles that ensure the endurance of a fair and just society, would gradually fade away over the next thousand years. The development of the new Islamic civilization would also be the beginning of the modern age. Classical history ends

with the advent of Islam. Greek learning and philosophy as well as the newer sciences of Algebra, trigonometry, Arabic numerals and the decimal system etc. would be transmitted mostly through the great translation schools in Spain and Sicily to the rest of Europe, where the roused genius of the Western nations would end the dark ages and usher in the reformation that leads directly to our times.

Today, the term “Caliphate” is marred with thoughts and images associated with the brutal regime of ISIS (the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). A comparison between the Rightly Guided Caliphate and ISIS is odious, to say the least. Far from the principles of democratic governance inherent in the ideology and practice of the Rightly Guided Caliphate, ISIS represents a diametrically opposed system of belief and conduct. Its system represents autocratic and tyrannical rule, deprivation of human rights (in particular religious freedom), brutal treatment of citizenry (including draconian punishments), aggressive war (including acts of terrorism), etc. The distinguishing feature of the political system which succeeded the Holy Prophet was that its inception and functioning was based on the democratic principle of *government by counsel*. The rules, laws and statutes of this government were based solidly on the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet’s example, and implemented by men who were imbued with the spiritual attributes of God. In other words, the intent of the government was the doing of good to people. In fact, the manner in which ISIS conducts itself is described in the Holy Quran and is unequivocally denounced:

Say: My Lord forbids... unjust rebellion ... (7:33)

And make not mischief in the land after its reform. (7:85)

And those who break the covenant of God after its confirmation, and cut asunder that which God has ordered to be joined, and make mischief in the land, for them is the curse, and theirs is the evil end of the Abode. (13:25)

In the lives of the Holy Prophet and that of his righteous successors we see how the religion of Islam produced a virtuous society. The root cause of the sad plight of the majority of Muslim nations today is due to their having drifted away from the teachings of the Quran and the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The result has been that they have neglected to generate these virtues within themselves. The silver lining to this cloud is that there is a growing realization of this failing and a sincere desire to take corrective action. The same Quran and the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad are still present to successfully undertake this corrective action. What is needed is the

will and the knowledge to take the initiative. And the aims and objectives of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Ahmadiyya Movement is to make just this knowledge widely available for humanity’s benefit. ■

Footnote:

1. An exception may be made in the case of Umar bin Abdul Aziz (whose successorship was between 717-720), due to not only being a temporal ruler of the Muslim community but also a “mujaddid” (the type of spiritual successor to Prophet Muhammad as will be discussed in Dr. Mohammed Ahmad’s presentation titled “The Spiritual Dispensation of Caliphs”).

The Spiritual Dispensation of “Caliphs”

The role of “Mujaddids” in the Ever-Enduring Caliphate

By Dr. Mohammed Ahmad

[In August 2016, in conjunction with its annual convention in Columbus, Ohio, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society held a symposium attended by clergy, academics and members of the interfaith community titled “The True Significance of Islamic Caliphate”. Due to the rise of a so-called “Islamic State” in Iraq and Syria, the symposium intended to dispel the misperceptions commonly associated with the term “Caliphate” today. And this counter-narrative of the true significance of Islamic Caliphate, from authoritative Islamic sources, it was hoped would provide meaningful information to balance the dialogue on this popular yet very misunderstood topic. This article was delivered by Dr. Mohammed Ahmad, President of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society, and focused on how “mujaddids” (or divinely appointed reformers) continued the spiritual dispensation of Caliphs after the al Khulafa ar-Rashidun (or the Rightly Guided Caliphs).]

As has been explained this morning, the Holy Quran makes reference to God raising successors (“Caliphs”) on earth. The one significance of a Caliph is that of “man”. We are told that “man” has been created as a ruler on earth. The other significance of a Caliph is that of being a leader of a community. And, at least in the Sunni Muslim tradition, the first four Caliphs (Hazrat Abu Bakr, Hazrat Uthman, Hazrat Umar and Hazrat Ali) are regarded as the “Rightly Guided” Caliphs of the early Muslim community due to their having lead the Muslim community along the lines of true Islamic precepts.

However, there is yet another significance to the concept of Islamic Caliphate. It is based on a *spiritual dis-*

persation, rather than temporal leadership. As the Holy Quran states:

God has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will surely make them successors (caliphs) in the earth as He made those before them to be successors (caliphs) ... (24:55)

The words “as He made those before them” is significant. Just as the Quran likens Prophet Muhammad to Prophet Moses – as both were law-bearing prophets who provided detailed guidance on how to live one’s life in accordance with the divine will – so too has the Muslim community be likened to the followers of Moses. Therefore, the *promise* in this verse relates to saintly figures who would arise among the followers of Prophet Muhammad (as spiritual successors to Prophet Muhammad) just as noble prophets arose in the Mosaic dispensation (following the laws and guidance revealed to Prophet Moses).

This spiritual significance of Islamic Caliphate is further explained in one of Prophet Muhammad’s sayings, recorded in both of the most authentic books of *Hadith* (Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim). Prophet Muhammad is recorded as saying:

The Israelites were governed by their prophets. When one prophet died, another would come to take his place. But there is no prophet to come after me. However, there will certainly be successors (Caliphs), and there will be many of them.

This is the true significance of Islamic Caliphate – it is a spiritual dispensation of righteous followers of Prophet Muhammad who provide guidance to the Muslim community on contemporary issues of importance throughout the ages.

I would like to elaborate on this. The Holy Quran provides a beautiful illustration of the relation between the physical and spiritual Beneficence of God in the following way. It states:

Or, Who created the heavens and the earth, and sends down for you water from the cloud? Then We cause to grow thereby beautiful gardens – it is not possible for you to make the trees thereof to grow. Is there a god with Allah? Nay they are a people who deviate! Or, Who made the earth a resting place and made in it rivers, and raised on it mountains, and placed between the two seas (salt water and sweet water) a barrier? Is there a god with Allah? Nay, most of them know not! Or, Who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil, and will make you successors (Caliphs) in the earth? Is there a god with Allah? Little is it that you mind! (27: 60-62)

In these verses, the wonderful signs of the existence of God are presented: the creation of the heavens and the earth, the manifestation of natural resources, the sustenance provided for all, and the regulation of universal laws. The wonderful signs of the existence of a Divine Being are followed by another equally pertinent sign: and that is, the manifestation of the greatness of man.

But mark the contrast! This manifestation of the existence of God is not to be sought in the power of man as the conqueror of the forces of nature, but in his weakness and need for divine guidance and assistance. In the time of great distress, when man is unable to find help from any source, he throws himself on the Divine threshold and seeks the favor of God. We are thus told that the manifestation of God’s great power of deliverance of a weak mortal who finds himself in extreme distress is as clear evidence of the existence of God as the manifestation of God’s control over the mighty forces of nature. It is a testimony to God’s spiritual manifestation being just as clear as His physical or material expression.

So, the lesson is that a divinely blessed temporal successorship (or *Caliphate*) can be determined on whether it is based on a genuine spiritual foundation. In these verses a prophecy is given to the early Muslims. At a time of being in total and utter distress, being cruelly persecuted and tortured, the very continued existence of their faith being threatened, they were told that their sincere faith in the Lord and their perseverance under the most trying circumstances will manifest in God making them rulers. This was a thought that could not have been imagined under the circumstances of the time, and which the world eventually witnessed as the greatest conquest in history.

Therefore, the real successorship to Prophet Muhammad is in the spiritual sphere. The first 4 rightly guided Caliphs mentioned earlier this morning were extraordinary in this respect, being both temporal and spiritual successors. Thereafter, the spiritual dispensation was carried on through saintly persons and, primarily, through those known as *Mujaddids*. These spiritual *Caliphs* are Reformers or Revivers of the faith. The Holy Prophet Muhammad explained:

Verily, God shall raise for this Ummah (community), at the beginning of every century, one who will reform/revive for it its religion. (Abu Dawood, Kitab us Sunan, chapter “Al- Malahim, vol. 2, p.241)

These *mujaddids*, being the spiritual successors to Prophet Muhammad, do not add anything to the religion, nor take anything away from it; they only renovate

and reinstate lost faith in the hearts of people. They are persons of sterling character, having deep knowledge of the Holy Quran, and reflect the noble qualities of the Prophet Muhammad in every age. They achieve a very high spiritual stage, thereby receiving communications from On High, known as *wahy wilayat* (or saintly revelations). During the past 14 centuries, there have been persons who have been recognized as the *mujaddid* of their respective eras. To name a few: *Abu Hamid al-Ghazali* of Khorasan, Persia in the fifth century of the Islamic era, *Ibn Arabi* of Eastern Spain in the seventh century of the Islamic era, *Shah Waliullah* of Delhi of India in the twelfth century, etc.

In the current age, the person who claimed to be the *mujaddid* of the time was Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement. In reference to verse 55 of chapter 24 of the Holy Quran, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explains:

Thus God Almighty states that He shall send Caliphs of the Holy Prophet from time to time. The word Caliph has been adopted to indicate that they shall be heirs of the Holy Prophet and partake of his blessings, as used to happen in the earlier ages; the faith shall be revived at their hands and security shall be established after the prevalence of fear; that is, they shall come at times when there would be disruption to the Muslim community.

Accordingly, as a *mujaddid*, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's teachings focused on the *Islamic basis of spirituality*. He expounded on the deep insights contained in the Holy Quran that not only served as food for the soul, but also for the mind. His teachings and lessons presented Islam as a spiritual faith and one that resonates with logic, reason and rationality. And as a *practical matter*, his teachings showed how the religion of Islam provides solutions to mankind in an age consumed by materialism and disregard for higher moral values. Wars for land, resources and power over the past century (including the two world wars) revealed the terribly destructive potential of man that had never been witnessed before, millions upon million having been killed.

And this reform initiative by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was based on the premise that the achievement of peace in the world is dependent on the *spiritual reformation of the individual*. The reformation of the individual, is what leads to the reformation of a community, then of an entire people, and then of all of humanity. In essence, it was a call for *individual responsibility* to bring about peace to the world.

And integral to this initiative of reviving this principle of individual reformation among Muslims, was to

remove the belief that Islam condones hostility, aggression and intolerance. Looking around the world today, we see how aptly identified this focus was and how imperative it is in order to establish peace in the modern world. Whether it is in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Tunisia, Nigeria, or even places like the Philippines, we see the emergence of radical groups causing destruction in the name of Islam in order to justify their political agendas. See, this reform by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was aimed at stripping these misguided people from the garb of Islam that they wear to claim authority and to recruit the ignorant and uninformed.

In a very moving passage in a book titled "Message of Peace", Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explains that the God of Islam is described in the Quran as a God of love, mercy and compassion, and that intolerance is inconsistent with an understanding of the Divine in this faith. He wrote:

Friends, ponder for God's sake, and say whether such beliefs are acceptable to reason, whether there is anything in human conscience which responds to them. I cannot see how a rational being can believe, on the one hand, that God is the Lord of the whole universe, and yet say, on the other, that He has withdrawn His fostership and care from the greater part of the world, and that His love and mercy is confined to one people and one country.

He goes on to write:

Our God has not withheld His bounty from any people. The powers and faculties which He bestowed on the ancient peoples of India, have also been bestowed on the Arabs, the Persians, the Syrians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Europeans and the Americans. For all of them, the earth of God serves as a floor, and for all of them His sun, moon, and stars give light ... All of them derive benefit from the air, water, fire, earth and other things created by God, and all of them use the produce of the earth ... These liberal ways of God teach us that we also should do good to all mankind, and should not be narrow-minded, nor limit our sympathy (for anyone).

Now, as a consequence to articulating this position of the universality of God and the need for man to manifest the same sympathetic approach in his or her dealings with others, it was necessary for Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to call out the extremist religious personalities who were preaching a distorted and perverted interpretation of the concept of "jihad" in Islam. And relatedly, he called attention to the true character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad as a mercy to all nations and not a

proponent of warfare, as many have tried to portray him as. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad wrote:

The ignorant religious leaders have greatly deceived the masses and declared acts of brutality, cruelty and inhumanity to be the key to attaining paradise ...

The ignorant ones have merely heard the word “jihad” and are using it as a pretext and cover for satisfying their own selfish ends, or purely out of fanaticism and lunacy are perpetrating bloodshed.

This Movement created by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad advocated the belief that Muslims do not need to focus on being strong military to defend their faith from others, but rather the true and pure teachings of Islam are such that if presented to people its beauty would be naturally apparent, and that this is how Islam spread in the early years, not by force as many have come to believe.

And he named the Movement “Ahmadiyya” after the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s other name “Ahmad”, which signifies one who is patient and shows perseverance in times of trials (and reflects the period of the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s life in Mecca in which he and the early Muslims suffered severe persecution and bore it all patiently). And members of this Movement pledged to revive this example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s character and promote the spiritual basis of the Islamic faith to others. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explained:

Those who join my army, I order them to give up these ideas [of a jihad of war], and rather to purify their hearts, develop and nurture their feelings of mercy towards all humankind and be helpers of those in distress and suffering. They should spread peace on earth, as this is how their religion will spread.

Today, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement continues this legacy of the work of the *mujaddid* (or spiritual Caliph) of the time. It is a Movement that works to establish an academic approach to the study and interpretation of Islam, thereby challenging the extremist ideologies of radical groups that use a perverted interpretation of Islam to further their political ambitions. In essence, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement is the anti-ISIS of our day. Its goal is the furtherance of spirituality, not political dominance. It stands for peaceful co-existence, not oppression. And, it relies on the belief that sincere faith and perseverance is mightier than any military force. I recall once more the words of the Holy Quran:

Or, Who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil.

We pray that our humble efforts, along with those of many other faithful servants of the One God, will contribute to establishing peace on earth. Ameen. Thank you for your attention. ■

The book “The Early Caliphate”

Compiled by The Editor

At the symposium on “True Significance of Islamic Caliphate”, participants were gifted a copy of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s book “The Early Caliphate”. Below is reproduced the Preface to the book, followed by some reviews.

The Early Caliphate, which is a record of thirty years of ideal Islamic rule, is a natural sequel to Muhammad the Prophet, in which I offered a picture of the life of that great benefactor of humanity, the Prophet Muhammad, who of all of the world’s great men is the most misunderstood. Two reasons have prompted me to undertake this task. The first is that, just as the Holy Prophet brought about a transformation which is unparalleled in the history of the world, to his immediate followers it was vouchsafed to contribute not only “the most amazing story of conquest in the whole history of our race” [A Short History of the World by H.G. Wells], but also wonderful moral and spiritual uplift of humanity. The second reason is that in all histories of this period written by either Muslim or non-Muslim writers, there exist many misunderstandings about the great and noble deeds of the most righteous monarchs that the world has ever produced.

In the Early Caliphate I have dealt with the period of thirty years that followed the death of the Holy Prophet. In Islamic history this period is known as *Khilafah Rashidah* or the rightly directed Caliphate, the underlying significance being that the men who were chosen to steer the temporal bark of Islam during this period were also models of righteousness and that they led the Muslim nation onward both temporally and spiritually. In a hadith of the Holy Prophet, this period of thirty years is specially called *Khilafah* (or Successorship to the Holy Prophet) as distinguished from *Mulk* (or the Kingdom of Islam which came after it). In the last phase of the Holy Prophet’s life he was both prophet and king, a spiritual guide of his people as well as their temporal head, and therefore the later phase of the kingdom of Islam in which the king was only the temporal head does not fully represent the idea of successorship. The *Khilafah Rashidah* or the Early Caliphate, however, is in both aspects fully representative of successorship to

the Prophet, and it is for this reason that I have included in the history of the Caliphate an account of the lives of the four Caliphs whose reigns constitute the Early Caliphate, viz., Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali.

I would draw attention to two salient points about which there prevails great misconception. The first is the general impression among Muslims as well as non-Muslims that, though the battles which the Holy Prophet had to fight were defensive and not aggressive, yet the wars of the Early Caliphate were undertaken with no other object than the expansion of Islam and the territorial extension of its kingdom. In this short history I have shown that this is quite an erroneous view, and that Muslims never sallied forth to impose their religion or even their rule on the neighbouring empires; or to offer what has frequently been represented as the alternatives to Islam or *Jizyah*. This question has been fully dealt with in the lives of Abu Bakr and Umar. The second point to which I wish to draw special attention relates to the equally great misconception as to internal dissensions of the times of Uthman and Ali. The example of greatness set by Abu Bakr and Umar are not wanting in Uthman and Ali; only they are revealed in a different sphere.

The book was written originally in Urdu in the form of a simple history. The element of the lives of the Caliphs was added in a second edition, and it is now that second edition that is being presented in English garb. The translation has been done by my able and esteemed friend Maulana Muhammad Yaqub Khan, Editor of Light, to whom my sincerest thanks are due for his labour of love. I must also thank him for the help he has given me in reading the proofs.

Islamic Culture (April 1935):

“Indeed two books: (1) *Muhammad The Prophet*, (2) *The Early Caliphate*, by Muhammad Ali, together constitute the most complete and satisfactory history of the early Muslims hitherto compiled in English.”

The New Orient (March 1925):

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The Hindu (Madras, January 9, 1933):

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United India and Indian States (Delhi, January 1933):

Maulana Muhammad Ali is very well known in this country and abroad as a writer on Islam and comparative religion. His books are widely read and widely circulated.

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Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, Islamic Research Academy (Cairo, Egypt, 2002)

Referring to your request submitted to the Department of Research, Writing and Translation at the Islamic Research Academy Al-Azhar Al-Sharif in regard to reviewing, evaluating and providing the opinion of Al-Azhar regarding the following books:

1) *The Early Caliphate*...

written in English language by Maulana Muhammad Ali.

The Department hereby confirms that the above mentioned books contains useful knowledge and do not include anything that contradicts the Religion of Islam. *Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu*

General Director of the Department of Research, Writing and Translation

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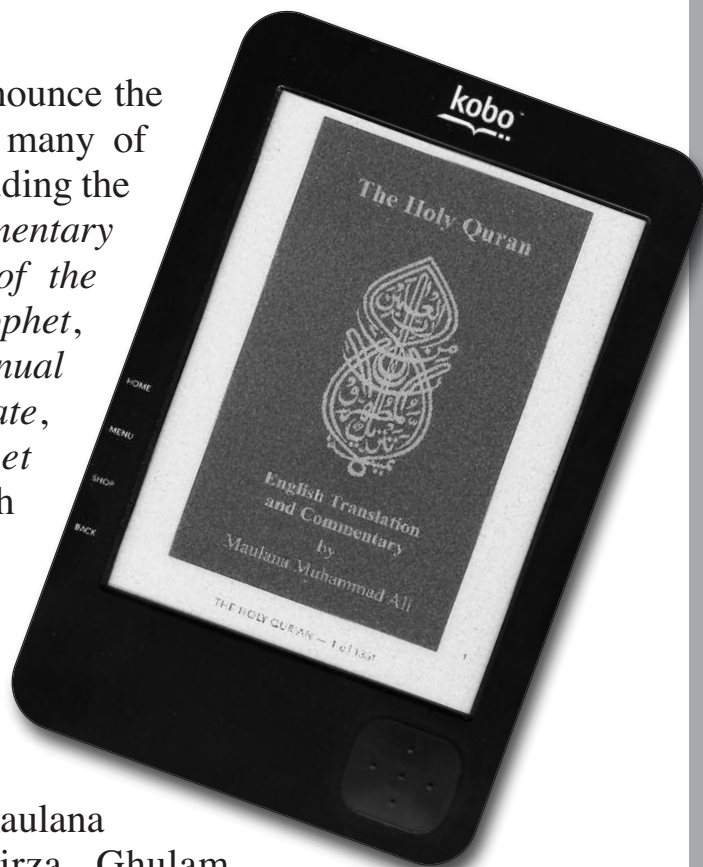
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