

*“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**

**October – December 2018**

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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**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:

<b>U.S.A.</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>U.K.</b>	<b>Canada</b>
<b>Holland</b>	<b>Fiji</b>
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#### 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 Need for Restoring Civility in Society

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

*[This article (with slight modification) comprises the introductory presentation to the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society' annual convention – titled "Building Bridges: Lessons on Civility and Religious Harmony in Times of Intolerance and Conflict" – held in Columbus, Ohio on October 6, 2018. In this presentation, the Editor first addresses the current culture of incivility and polarization in society, particularly in the political realm, and its effect and impact on the citizenry. Then, as a foundation to the lessons on how to restore civility and religious harmony in society later presented at the symposium, the central notion of "respect" was explained from a religious perspective. The video recording of the presentations from the symposium are available on the LAIS YouTube page, at: [youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IIVBGtc\\_2R5LrAAVjyx\\_e9xoEjraFPnB](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IIVBGtc_2R5LrAAVjyx_e9xoEjraFPnB).]*

### Current Culture of Incivility

Just a glance at the headlines from recent times is enough to show that we are living in a very unique period of division and polarization. Surveys show that the partisan split in America is the highest it's been in decades. And polls reveal the sharp spike in the contempt that people express for their opponents (political and otherwise). We have in recent times become accustomed to incendiary rhetoric in the public space. Name-calling, insults, bullying, have become commonplace, replacing the professionalism and civility that we normally associated with positions of leadership. And partisans, feeding off this culture of incivility, maintain dogmatic opposition and distrust in their attitudes towards others.

And much of this division, we know, is manufactured and then exploited for political purposes, appealing to people's fears and anxieties, especially through the proliferation of misinformation and even conspiracy theories on the internet and through social media platforms. There are those who purposefully tap into racial, ethnic and religious demarcations, trying to pit one faction against the other.

Muslims have been one of the groups affected in various ways as part of such schemes. We hear statements made about Muslims as if they are one monolithic assembly, generalizing the acts of terrorists to all 1.5 billion adherents. We see certain policies being instituted that are directly aimed at treating persons from Muslim-majority countries differently, sending the mes-

sage in no uncertain terms as to who is welcome in America. And these statements and actions have far reaching effect. They impact the views of the citizenry and, unfortunately, give incentive to some who seek opportunities to freely act out deep-seated prejudices and bigotry.

This map shows incidents in which mosques have been the target of attacks between January and March of 2017. There were 35 incidents during this three-month period, ranging from vandalism with spray painting of hate speech to arson resulting in the complete destruction of the property. If you're able to tell, Columbus was not spared. And this does not come close to portraying the reality of incidents against individual Muslims, typically Muslim women being harassed and having their head scarves pulled off, and the phrase "go back to your country" being yelled at even Muslim school children who were obviously born in America.

But what is probably the most sinister way in which Muslims have been exploited for political purposes in recent times is by making the term "Muslim" a slur that is used as an insult and part of a smear campaign to demean a political opponent. This was one of the most popular attacks made against President Obama – claiming that he was in fact a Muslim, which meant he was associated with all of the negative connotations that certain groups were attaching to that word. And, notably, it took General Colin Powell, someone from the other side of the political aisle, to publicly change the narrative of the discussion from whether President Obama was a Muslim or not, to what if he was. Similarly, it was the late Senator John McCain, while campaigning for President on behalf of the Republican party, who defended then-candidate Obama in a town hall meeting as "a decent family man" when a lady referred to him as an "Arab", who probably meant "Muslim", but nonetheless was referring to her distrust of him and questioning his patriotism.

But what, I imagine, was an unintended consequence of this campaign is the alliance that was formed by people of assorted backgrounds resisting this pressure ... like in this image of a banner for a new restaurant called "MexiKhan". I mean, come on, when were you able to get burritos and falafel in the same place?

But in all seriousness, I think people are just tired. They are tired of all the discord and animosity. They are tired of the degradation of public discourse. And they are tired of the lack of "respect" shown to others in society. It reminds me of the words of the character John Coffey in the "Green Mile". He said: "I'm tired, boss. Mostly I'm tired of people being ugly to each other".

## Respect as Foundation to Restoring Civil Society

So what we would like to first present today are some basic principles from a religious perspective on how to restore civility and religious harmony in society. And the foundation for this is found in the simple yet central notion of “respect”. Showing “respect” is really the foundation for *any* harmonious relationship, whether it is between individuals, communities or even nations. It is a simple concept, one that we learn as children. Unfortunately, as adults, we tend to choose who we believe is *worthy* of respect. And oftentimes it is society (and popular culture) that dictates this for us. Celebrities, the rich, the powerful, the famous and even the infamous – these are the types of people that we are commonly presented as being worthy of respect.

Religion, however, teaches us something different. Religion teaches us that we are to see the value in everyone. Respecting others is considered a noble attribute. And this applies especially to those who are not famous or powerful – the poor, the weak, the refugee, the under-represented and marginalized members of society – giving respect to such persons is in fact considered a sign of true character.

### From an Islamic Perspective

Now, I would like to briefly share with you three ways in which this concept of “respect for others” is presented from the Islamic tradition.

#### *Respect for all people*

The first is a general principle of respect for all people as though mankind is one family. The Holy Quran – the religious scripture of Islam – teaches that all of humanity is one, and therefore all people are equal and deserve equal respect. It states in 2:213: “*All mankind is a single nation.*” It also states that all people have descended from the same parents (49:13), and are like dwellers of one home, having the same earth as a resting place and the same sky as a roof (2:22).

And this concept of mankind being like one family was beautifully explained by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad – the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. In his book titled *Message of Peace*, he addresses the issue of the intolerance and disrespect often shown by people of different faiths towards one another; he writes:

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.

...

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 too should do good to all mankind, and should not be narrow-minded, nor limit our respect (for anyone).

Correspondingly, “diversity” among people is understood in Islam as a means of betterment and progress for humanity, not a cause for prejudice and disunity. The Quran states in 49:13:

O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female, and made you tribes and nations so that **you may know each other**.

The Quranic lesson is that differences in race, national origin and culture aren’t meant to divide, but rather to facilitate growth in humanity by learning from one another. It acknowledges that different people have different experiences from which others may learn, and that in respecting these differences lies much value and worth for humanity as a whole.

#### *Respect for Faith Traditions and Religious Personalities*

The second way in which Islam advances respect for others – in particular, respect for other religions – is by upholding the truthful origins of other faith traditions and the integrity of the holy founders of other religions. According to Islam, just as God provides for the material sustenance of all humanity, so too does He provide for all mankind’s spiritual nourishment. And God has done this throughout history by raising prophets and messengers among *all* people on earth, so that *all* people would be equally blessed with God’s guidance.

The Quran states: “*For every nation there is a messenger*” (10:47). It also states: “*There is not a people but a warner has gone among them*” (35:24). Prophet Muhammad is in fact recorded as saying that there were 124,000 prophets in all.

So, the founders and religious personalities of the

great religions of the world are respected in Islam as *messengers* of God. It is understood that they were sent to specific people under particular conditions for their guidance and spiritual revival. These holy personalities taught great truths and were role models of morals and virtues to their people. And when we see so much commonality between the different faith traditions, we understand why – because they originated from the same source. And the message was essentially the same: believe in God and do good to others.

#### *Respect for each Individual as a “Holy Spirit”*

And, finally, the third way (that I will discuss) in which Islam furthers the concept of respect for others is by teaching that every single person has the *Spirit of God* within them (and is therefore inherently holy). According to Islam, like in other religions, we are not simply physical beings, but also spiritual ones as well. And that is because each one of us has a *soul*. And we are told in the Quran that our soul is in fact the Spirit of God breathed into us.

Now, the Spirit of God within us means that each one of us possesses the divine attributes. Just as God is Loving, Compassionate, Merciful, Forgiving, etc., so too does every human being possess these attributes within them. And exercising these qualities – being loving towards others, being compassionate and merciful in one’s daily interactions, and forgiving others for their faults and mistakes – is what develops these attributes and makes one “closer to God”. As an analogy, the Quran likens the soul to a *seed*. Just as a seed has certain qualities inherent in it that if cultivated properly can grow into a garden, so too does the soul possess the divine attributes that if developed suitably can lead to the spiritual garden of heaven.

And appreciating the divine existence within others is a natural antidote to bigotry and intolerance. It is very difficult to hate another or cause harm to another when you understand that every person has the divine within them. Differences – whether religious or political or even social or cultural – do not rise to the level of considering others to be of no value or worth when you believe they possess the same fundamental spiritual essence as you. History bears witness to the fact that it is the belief in some inherent superiority of one group over another – whether it is a belief in a chosen people, or in racial supremacy, or in national exceptionalism – that has been the root cause of wars, genocides and bloodshed from the beginning of time.

#### **Conclusion**

Now, I’m sure the points I have just relayed are relative to lessons on respect in other faith traditions. They are universal truths that are self-evident. Yet, despite

their conventional appeal, it is difficult to find them being practiced. So, our next presentation will identify and outline some practical guidance on how to apply these general lessons so as to restore civility and religious harmony in society. Which brings my introduction to a close – I thank you for your kind attention. ■

## **Civility and Religious Harmony, from an Islamic Perspective**

**By Dr. Noman Malik**

*[This article comprises the keynote address by Dr. Noman Malik at the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society’ annual convention – titled “Building Bridges: Lessons on Civility and Religious Harmony in Times of Intolerance and Conflict” – held in Columbus, Ohio on October 6, 2018. In this presentation, Dr. Malik addresses the issue of civility and religious harmony from an Islamic perspective. He first defines the term “civil discourse” and then explains its fundamental meaning and significance. He then explains how civil discourse is expressly prescribed in the Holy Quran. He further provides specific examples from lessons in the Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad as to how to be a responsible conversation partner and achieve mutually respectful and effective dialogue. The video recording of the presentations from the symposium are available on the LAIS YouTube page, at: [youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IIVBGtc\\_2R5LrAAVjyxe9xoEjraFPnB](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IIVBGtc_2R5LrAAVjyxe9xoEjraFPnB).]*

#### **Introduction – Defining Civil Discourse**

I have been asked to speak on the topic of *Civility and Religious Harmony from an Islamic Perspective*. In particular, I will highlight some of the lessons that are taught in the Islamic tradition on how to engage in civil discourse with people who hold differing views.

So, to begin, what is *civil discourse*? A 2011 conversation among national leaders from many fields, held at the US Supreme Court, defined civil discourse (in the political context) as:

“robust, honest, frank and constructive dialogue and deliberation that seeks to advance the public interest” (Brosseau, 2011).

National Public Radio journalist Diane Rehm, who during an event at Oberlin College in which the meaning of “civil discourse” (in the context of more informal discussions) was discussed, explained it as simply:

“our ability to have conversation about topics about which we disagree, and our ability to listen to each other’s perspectives” (Choby, 2011).

Perhaps the one most frequently quoted definition of “civil discourse” is that from James Calvin Davis’ book, *In Defense of Civility*, which defines it as:

“the exercise of patience, integrity, humility and mutual respect in civil conversation, even (or especially) with those with whom we disagree” (Davis, 2010).

In other words, civil discourse entails upholding and practicing certain moral and ethical values that make dialogue productive: being patient; speaking with integrity; wanting to listen and learn with humility; and, most of all, having mutual respect despite differing opinions. And, it is just as much about being able to speak in a certain way as it is about being able to listen effectively. That means being able to “hear our neighbor’s position in his or her own terms.”

### Differences in Opinion is Healthy

At the very heart of the notion of civil discourse is the understanding that differences in opinion is okay. The goal is to have the differing parties appreciate the other party’s position, not to have parties necessarily agree. In fact, debating competing views has much value. It is in the course of vigorous debate that many solutions are put forth from which the best option may be selected, and this advances the public good.

Prophet Muhammad also explained the benefit of differing opinions and the value in debating competing views by stating: “Differences of opinion in my community is a blessing.” Prophet Muhammad advanced this notion because he wanted his community to think, ponder and reflect over issues. It was understood that applying one’s mental faculties is a requirement to understanding one’s religion, as opposed to mere blind faith.

And this concept is further illustrated in the manner in which the Quran is presented. Muslims believe the Quran to be the “Word of God” – discourse directly from God, in first person speech, to mankind. And this communication from God abides by the principle of giving people the freedom to determine for themselves whether they want to accept it or not. It states emphatically:

There is no compulsion in religion – the right way is indeed clearly distinct from error. – (2:252)

It states elsewhere:

We (God) have truly shown him (man) the way; he may be thankful or unthankful. – (76:3)

It also states:

And say: The Truth is from your Lord; so let him who please believe, and let him who please disbelieve. – (18:29)

So, the speech of God itself, as presented in the Quran, provides a valuable lesson on upholding freedom of belief, which is a fundamental principle of civil discourse. Just as God does not force anyone to accept His words, so too should we appreciate in our conversations with others the value in every person being afforded the right to form his or her own belief and hold true to his or her own conscience.

### Civil Discourse Specifically Prescribed

In addition to the illustration of how the arguments in the Quran are presented, the Quran specifically prescribes debate about religious matters to be conducted in a civil manner. It states:

Call to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and **goodly exhortation**, and argue with them in the **best manner**. – (16:125)

Thus, for Muslims, civil discourse is a religious obligation. It is required that religious issues are discussed with “*wisdom*”, and “*goodly exhortation*”. And arguing or debating must be conducted “*in the best manner*”. What is meant by “*in the best manner*”? Essentially, it means being a responsible conversation partner. And throughout the Quran, we are presented with lessons on how to be a “responsible conversation partner” so as to facilitate effective dialogue.

### Substantive Basis Required

The fundamental prerequisite to being a responsible conversation partner is for there to be a legitimate basis for one’s position. That doesn’t mean everyone has to reach the same conclusion. However, in order to have an effective debate on an issue, one must present information that has some *foundation in fact*. Today, especially with the prominence of social media (where everyone has a megaphone and can engage in arguments with people they have never even met simply by sharing a meme they found somewhere on the internet), there is a definite decline in the integrity of arguments regularly made. This is why “fact checking” has become such a prominent industry.

The Holy Quran requires that when debating, one must have a substantive basis for his or her position and not resort to simple dogmatic opposition to the other group’s point of view. There are numerous examples of this; for instance, it states:

Bring your proof if you are truthful. – (2:111)

It also states:

Do you have any knowledge so you would bring it forth to us? – (6:148)

Basically, the Quran prescribes the principle of *keeping them honest*, and not have people argue simply for the sake of arguing. So, for example, tweets with no factual basis whatsoever is not the type of communication that it envisions as effective dialogue.

### Aspect of Moral Integrity

But the Quran goes one step further. It is after all a book of moral guidance. It requires honest dealings with others. Like it mandates honesty in commercial transactions, so too does it require honesty in conversation and dialogue. It aims at making discourse effective, not simply a means of gamesmanship. It states:

And mix not up truth with falsehood, nor hide the truth while you know. – (2:242)

Thus, the Quran identifies the problem of arguing for the sake of arguing, and how some people hold on to certain positions despite knowing their positions lack factual support. It warns against the practice of dishonest debate, where one simply follows their low desires and not evidence. For instance, it states:

... why then do you dispute about that of which you have no knowledge? – (3:66)

Those who are unjust follow their low desires without any knowledge. – (30:29)

### Responsibility to Investigate/Verify

And the Quran further places responsibility on people who receive information from others to *investigate* and *verify* that information. It requires one to confirm the accuracy of the material. In essence, it is an antidote to so-called “fake news”. It states:

O you who believe, if a man of suspect character brings you news, **look carefully into it** (*investigate/verify*), lest you harm a people in ignorance, then be sorry for what you did. – (49:6)

Throughout history there have been people or entities that find it in their benefit to sow dissension among people and try to pit one group against another. This is no different today. Whether it be within America or from outside, we know there are groups that attempt to manipulate public opinion, and purposefully manufacture outrage and distrust, in deceptive ways. Again, social media platforms make these types of efforts much easier today than ever before. So, in order to engage in honest and effective dialogue, there is an inherent responsibility to investigate the information before accepting it or spreading it to others, as outlined in the Quran.

### Guiding Principle: Straightforward Speech

In addition to engaging in dialogue with integrity – that

is, ensuring there is some substantive merit to one’s position – the Quran provides specific guidance on the manner in which one *should* and *should not* engage in dialogue. In situations where opposing parties have differences of opinion involving deeply held beliefs, the chances of acrimonious argument is high. And when the exchange degenerates into yelling matches and a clash of egos, then the goal of understanding ends and the discourse is no longer effective. As the Quran warns:

And turn not thy face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exultingly. Surely God loves not any self-conceited boaster.

And pursue the right course in thy going about and **lower thy voice**. Surely the most hateful of voices is the braying of asses.” – (31:18-19)

The Quran, therefore, lays great stress on honest, respectful, straightforward speech to prevent acrimony and name calling. For instance, it states: “speak straight words” (33:70). Basically, this is a call to engage in straightforward speech and to become an effective communicator. It is a call to communicate in a manner that is easily understood, and not with the intention of confusing the other party. Straightforward, plain and transparent information is the means to effective dialogue, not speech that aims to manipulate or trick the other party.

Moreover, the Quran also specifically warns against the type of acrimonious debate that results in harmful and injurious speech. It states:

O you who believe, let not people laugh at people perchance they may be better than they (i.e. mockery)... Neither find fault with your own people (i.e. denigrate), nor call one another by nicknames (slurs, whether racial, ethnic, class-based, etc. ... – (49:11)

So mocking others, denigrating them and resorting to slurs is understood as not only being ineffective but also a breach or violation of the duty owed to God.

### Responding to Abuse and Ridicule

But what should be done when the opposing party resorts to abusive language and harassing behavior? What comes to mind is the words of the former First Lady, Michelle Obama – she said: “When they go low, we go high.” This is exactly what the Quran prescribes. It mandates taking the higher moral ground, not lowering one’s self to the position of those incapable of engaging in civil discourse.

The Quran teaches that people should show humility in their dealings with others and not engage in confrontations with the ignorant. It states:

And the servants of the Beneficent (God) are they who walk on the earth in humility, and when

the ignorant address them, they say, Peace! – (25:63)

Take to forgiveness and enjoin good and turn aside from the ignorant. – (7:199)

And bear patiently what they say and forsake them with a **becoming withdrawal**. – (73:10)

The “*withdrawal*” therefore is to be done in a dignified, well-mannered way, to avoid descending to their level of abuse. It is to be a display of confidence in one’s strength to restrain the lower passions of venting one’s anger and responding in kind.

One example in the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad in which this was illustrated is when some people once accosted him by distorting the greeting “*assalamu alieikum*” (meaning “peace be upon you”) by saying “*assamalaikum*” (which means “death be upon you”). The Holy Prophet’s wife, Hazrat Aisha retorted to them: “And upon you be death”. The Holy Prophet ignored their insults and rather turned to his wife and said: “Be calm, Aisha; Allah loves that one should be kind and lenient in all matters”.

### Practical Techniques

In addition to these general lessons, the Quran also provides several practical techniques to help facilitate effective dialogue and amicable resolutions when dealing with opposing parties holding strongly-held opinions. I will briefly focus on two of them.

The first is to *focus on commonality*. The Quran demonstrates this in the guidance it provides as to how Muslims should can unite with people of other monotheistic faiths who may have differing beliefs and views about religion. It states:

Say: O People of the Book, come to an **equitable word** between us and you, that we shall serve none but God and that we shall not associate aught with Him, and that some of us shall not take others for lords besides God. – (3:64)

Here, we see the technique of focusing on commonality being used. Despite differences in theology, we are told that people of different faith traditions can come together in their belief in the existence and fundamental importance of God (regardless of the specific nuances in which they may understand what God exactly entails). It is an example of how to not let differences overshadow what is fundamentally in common and possibly encumber good relations and working jointly in good works.

The second technique is to always remember the *goal of justice* as being paramount in any interaction. This is a natural antidote to falling in the trap of defending certain positions at all costs. It also serves

as a check on letting one’s anger towards an opponent (because of something he or she may have said or done) divert you from the ultimate truth-seeking goal.

The Quran expresses this in various ways. It states:

O you who believe, be **maintainers of justice**, bearers of witness for God, even though it be against your own selves or (your parents) or near relatives – whether he be rich or poor, God has a better right over them both. So follow not (your) low desires, lest you deviate. And if you distort or turn away from (truth), surely God is ever Aware of what you do. – (4:135)

This Quranic verse is actually posted at the entrance of the faculty library at Harvard Law School, describing it as one of the greatest expressions of justice in history (along with quotes from St. Augustine and the Magna Carta).

Similarly, the Quran states elsewhere:

O you who believe, be upright for God, **bearers of witness with justice**; and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably. Be just; that is nearer to observance of duty. And keep your duty to God. Surely God is aware of what you do. – (5:8)

So, upholding the underlying goal of truth and justice in any debate, we are told, is not only a noble practice but also the most effective means to achieving the ultimate goal of better understanding.

Another incident in the life of the Holy Prophet illustrates this well. Once a person approached the Holy Prophet and claimed that the Holy Prophet owed him some money and rudely demanded it from him. This prompted his wife, Hazrat Aisha, to scold the man for his offensive tone. The Holy Prophet intervened and said to his wife: “It would have been better if you would have simply asked him to request his money in a more becoming manner and similarly advised me, as the debtor, to pay my debt on time.”

### Practical Illustration: Prophet Muhammad

Now, these lessons from the Quran on civil discourse were put into practice by the Holy Prophet Muhammad. When asked how he lived his life, his wife Hazrat Aisha replied “His character was the Quran”. So, we have an example in the life of Prophet Muhammad of what can be achieved when these principles are implemented in practical situations. A glance at the Holy Prophet’s life shows a consistent theme of him engaging in dialogue and negotiations with other parties to reach amicable terms for peace and solidarity.

After migrating to Medina with his small group of followers, the Holy Prophet was accepted as a mediat-

ing authority to end the bitter inter-tribal fighting between rival clans and maintain peace and cooperation among all Medinan groups. He negotiated what is known as the *Charter of Medina*, which established the collective responsibility of 9 Jewish tribes and the Muslim community. Despite the various groups' differences in religious affiliation and political views, the Treaty: 1) ensured freedom of religious beliefs and practices for all citizens; 2) it united all constituent groups to act as a unified front in the protection and well-being of the City; and 3) it required representation of all constituent groups when negotiating with other States.

Similarly, the Holy Prophet made *pacts* with neighboring idolatrous tribes to ensure peaceful relations, and entered into a *treaty* with a Christian Delegation from Najran with comparable terms to that in the Charter of Medina, ensuring religious freedom for all (including safeguarding of each party's places of worship) and guaranteeing the Bishop would retain his previous powers. In the closing years of his life, the Holy Prophet signed the *Treaty of Hudaibiyah* with the Quraish of Mecca - which contained very one-sided terms in favor of the Quraish - simply for the sake of peace. Despite what was considered humiliating terms for the Muslims, the Quran refers to the achievement of this Treaty as a "clear victory" because it resulted in the ceasing of hostilities against Muslims and a period of peace and security. And it was during this time of freedom and protection that Muslims were able to preach about their religion openly and Islam spread rapidly in the Arabian Peninsula.

### Conclusion

To conclude this talk, I'll just say that these principles on civil discourse that I have relayed today are universal. They are in some form or other widely understood and accepted. Yet we are living in a time marked by an alarming increase in abuse, vilification and hate. It shows that simply acknowledging certain principles is not enough. It takes an internal moral transformation to bring about change. If we look at history, we see it has taken a Krishna, a Buddha, a Moses, a Jesus or a Muhammad to bring about this moral transformation.

The Holy Prophet explained: "*One should do good as if you see God (i.e. God is always a present guiding force in one's actions).*" He went on to say: "*But if you cannot do good in that way, then at least do good as if you understand that God sees you.*" It is only when we can generate this type of love and consciousness in our hearts that we can restore civility to society and live in harmony with others. May God give us the wisdom and the strength to put these lessons into practice. God bless you all and thank you for listening to me. ■

## Quran in Conversation

By Prof. Michael Birkel

[This article comprises the presentation delivered by Prof. Michael Birkel at the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society's annual convention – titled "Building Bridges: Lessons on Civility and Religious Harmony in Times of Intolerance and Conflict" – held in Columbus, Ohio on October 6, 2018. In addition to presentations on lessons on civility and religious harmony, examples of works engaged in to build bridges between people of different faiths through respectful dialogue were also highlighted at the symposium. Prof. Birkel (Religious Studies, Earlham College, spoke about his book "Quran in Conversation", a beautiful illustration of civil dialogue in action. In this presentation, Prof. Birkel expounds on the motivation for engaging in this project of speaking to American Muslims about their faith, what he learned from his Muslim conversation partners, and the impact this work has had on him. The video recording of the presentations from the symposium are available on the LAIS YouTube page, at: [youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IVBGtc\\_2R5LrAAVjyxe9xoEjraFPnB](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IVBGtc_2R5LrAAVjyxe9xoEjraFPnB).]

First of all, thank you for the opportunity to be your guest and to think together with you about building bridges, about civility, and about religious harmony. I want to express my appreciation for the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and the way that it has been an important source of renewal and inspiration among Muslims worldwide, as well as a center of education for non-Muslims like me. May your work continue to be a source of blessing for you and for all whom you serve.

My friend, our friend, Fazeel Khan invited me to be with you today, to a project that I undertook to get to know my Muslim neighbors here in North America. I'd like to share a few words about what drew me to this project, about the wonderful Muslims that I met, about what I learned about the Qur'an, and about the memorable experience of being a guest among so many hospitable Muslims.

### The motivation for this project

Because my own spiritual tradition has shaped me to see teaching as a form of truth-telling and peacemaking, I felt an inner urgency (what my tradition would call a divine leading) to learn about Islam so that I could teach my students about your *din*. There is so much misinformation and intentional misrepresentation of Muslims, and so I wanted to learn what Islam really is, so that I could then convey that to my students. So I read a lot, and I gained some facility in Arabic, so that I could read your holy book. And I began teaching about Islam.

Because I teach about Islam with sympathy and respect, some Muslim students took courses with me. Some of them came to me and urged me to write something about Islam. I said that I was not a trained scholar of Islam, but they replied, “You explain our religion well and with great respect. We need non-Muslims like you to write about Islam.” I sat with that idea for a time. It then dawned on me that although I am not a trained scholar of Islam, I could talk to people who were and report what I learned. So I met with some 25 Muslims leaders and scholars, and I had one question for them: Would you please choose a passage from the Qur’an and talk with me about it? In short, I had a series of wonderful conversations, in which I witnessed the beauty and power of the Qur’an as it comes to life in the *ummah* here in North America.

### **A Taste of What I Learned from My Muslim Teachers**

Fazeel Khan and I met by providence at the annual convention of the Islamic Society of North America. I was attending a particular session, hoping to introduce myself to one of the speakers to see if he would be interested in being one of my conversation partners in this project. I sat down next to Fazeel and his gracious father, Dr. Noman Malik. The speaker did not show up for that event. Instead, I became acquainted with Fazeel, who is one of the Muslims leaders whose words are in this book. I learned much from him on many topics, from the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) to social justice to the hereafter, but the core of his message to me was that the purpose of human life is to identify, understand, and emulate the divine attributes of God. This statement of his is so compelling because it embraces so much of what it means to be a human being. It seems to me that to identify is to see, to recognize, to discern, to render sound judgment—all of these are fundamental human activities. To understand is to embrace knowledge at a deep level, to comprehend, to make use of our intellect. And to emulate is to act, and therefore to engage our ethical capacities, to exercise the moral dimension of what it means to be human. The purpose of human life is to identify, understand, and emulate the attributes of God—this strikes me as a beautiful description of Islam, and an invitation into the very heart of the spiritual life.

I met many other truly wonderful people. Imam Hassan al-Qazwini—a descendant of the Prophet himself, peace and blessings be upon him—spoke about 41:34. “Good and bad are not equal. Repel evil with good, so you will find the One between you and your enemy is turning him into your friend.” His message to me was this: As Muslim, Christians, and Jews, we read different texts, but we are worshipping the same God, and

we basically promote the same values. These are divine values, monotheistic values that we all share: reaching out to the neighbors, being kind to parents, being kind to others, taking care of the needy and the orphans.

I met with Ovamir Anjum, a young scholar of Islam, who teachers at the University of Toledo. He spoke with me on al-Fatiha, and taught me that in Islam God is merciful, eager to communicate that the world is good. To read the Qur’an with him was an experience of great awe, a profound sense of the numinous. He said these words about reading the Qur’an.

When reading the Qur’an you feel a sense of the overwhelming presence of God, ... in those moments everything else becomes irrelevant and ... unimportant. Worldly attachments and worldly concerns, [drop away]. On the one hand you don’t want to turn back to ... that is less than divine, so there is a sense of profound *sakeena* or tranquility. You’re at rest; you don’t want to be anywhere else. You feel a sense of delight which is like nothing else. ... That’s one feeling. There is also a feeling of incredible compassion toward everything else. You don’t want anything from anyone in return. When you open the Qur’an and read “In the name of Allah who is most merciful and ever merciful,” if you do not feel that divine mercy, then you are not reading the Qur’an.

Zayn Kassam showed me that the verse, “Everywhere you turn, there is the face of God” can be the lens through which one can read the Qur’an and in fact live one’s life.

I met with Sunni and Shi’i and with Muslims from many backgrounds: Middle Eastern, South Asian, American Muslims of African descent and of European descent. As a result, I came to appreciate the tremendous vitality among Muslims in North America. Islam is one, but the expression of it has been diverse over the centuries as the faith has responded to the needs of different times and places. Several mentioned to me that in this setting, Muslims from many countries and cultures and traditions meet here and respond to the challenges and opportunities of this time and place. It is a time of create exchange and creativity.

### **What I learned as a result of this work**

Here I must admit that I am still discovering this, because the effects of profound spiritual experiences may unveil themselves gradually. Certainly my image of the North American Muslim community has changed. My conception the *ummah* has been enlarged. There is a wide spectrum of Islam in North America. I encountered diversity without adversity. On numerous occasions I heard someone say, “I respect this person as

a fellow Muslim, even though we differ.” I was told that among the classical scholars of Islam, diversity was treasured as a divine mercy.

This respect did not preclude giving me advice. One fairly traditional imam, who was supportive of my project throughout, asked me, “Do the other Muslims that you’re talking to have beards?” Because we were already on friendly terms, I could respond, “Only the men.” I met with many men, but also with many women scholars of Islam.

As a result of my encounters with the Muslims in this book, I now read the Qur’an differently. They have become my reading companions. I read the Qur’an in the company of my Muslim teachers, and I feel their presence in the room as I open your holy book.

In addition to the power and beauty of the Qur’an itself, perhaps the other most memorable experience of this project was being a guest in the Muslim community. Hospitality and generosity are highly prized among Muslims, and I experienced the depth of those virtues, as I am experiencing them here at your convention. All of the conversations that I had were memorable. Some of them felt like the start of friendships that will last for a long time. I hope that this book can play a part in offering an alternative to what is often seen in the media in their portrayal of you and your faith. I am immensely grateful to the many Muslims who made it possible for me to pursue this project by opening their Qur’an, their spirit, and their lives to me.

The book seems to have spoken to readers, both Muslim and other-than-Muslim. Numerous Muslims have expressed gratitude to me for this portrait of their community. I have been treated with great respect by Muslims in various settings. This brings me joy because it suggests that they recognize their faith as it is depicted in the book. It is not a distortion, in their opinion. Readers of the book have contacted me, from Palestine to British Columbia. Non-Muslim readers seem to have benefited from this project as well. The book gets used in educational settings, from congregations to universities and Christian theological seminaries. I get invited occasionally to speak at various places, from the annual General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Church to Notre Dame and St. Mary’s College of South Bend, Indiana.

The project is still having its effects on me. The book is entitled *Qur’an in Conversation*, but I, rightly so, I believe, tried to remove myself from the center of attention in the final presentation of the book. The book grows out of conversations, but my role was chiefly to listen. I did not respond very much, other than to appreciate the wonderful words that I was hearing.

I still remain very interested in the Qur’an. I may begin another project, and I invite your thoughts as to whether it is worth doing. In my meetings with Muslims that shaped this book, we spoke about short passages that my interlocutors chose as a focus for our conversation. That was very rewarding, but I would like to immerse myself in the Qur’an, reading the entire text slowly, deeply, and receptively. I would like to explore more fully what it might mean to be a guest of the Qur’an, to read it not simply for information and study but with the anticipation of a spiritual experience. Some Christians would not approve of this. Some Muslims might approve of it but then be disappointed if I do not embrace Islam, which is not my intention or expectation. That seems to be the risk of such a project: rather than bring groups together, it might offend both. Still my sense is that, just as in the *Qur’an in Conversation*, the Qur’an became the catalyst for getting to know my Muslim neighbors, now my relationships with Muslims is drawing me more deeply into the Qur’an.

How might a Christian, a non-Muslim, engage openly and authentically with the sacred scripture of Islam? How might someone articulate such an encounter in a way that is useful to the promotion of interfaith understanding? In religious communities, some do not feel that they can travel to the boundaries. They feel safe only within their community. Some feel called to the borders, to meet the neighbors. Others pass through the gate, not to join another religion but to be their guest for a time, in order to come to a deeper understanding that they can then bring back for the benefit of their home community, to offer suggestions on how others might enter more fully into interreligious understanding.

It seems to me that, even if we agree that we worship the same God, it can be unsettling for some people to know that their soul’s Beloved has other names and other lovers. It can feel like we no longer know what to say about God, that there are no words that are adequate, or that there are too many words, arising from the particularities of our devotion. Perhaps always, when we strive to speak about the divine, human utterance is stretched beyond its capacity. But speech is how we communicate with others, and so we must attempt to speak with as much clarity as we can gather.

Does this idea have value for interfaith understanding? With God’s grace, perhaps I’ll find out. I recall the fourth-century non-Christian Symmachus, who urged toleration for his religious heritage in the face of the early Christian empire with his famous utterance “Surely by one path alone it is not possible to arrive at so great a mystery.” Is it all the same grand mystery toward which we strive to seek a path? The fact that it is a mystery, beyond the powers of human utterance,

compels me to admit that I cannot be sure that I know. Some people, such as Stephen Prothero, conclude that *God Is Not One*. This is the conclusion to which he comes in his book by that title, which argues that the world's religions are more dissimilar than similar. Still, the power of mutual recognition suggests to me that it is the same mystery that beckons us all.

Here I recall a moment when a Muslim said to me, "I can see your *noor*," which is the Arabic word for light. Muslim spirituality speaks of an inward *noor*, which is a manifestation of divine presence. His light beheld my light in mutual recognition. My experiences among these generous Muslims gives rise to a desire to continue and deepen the engagement, to perceive the beauty and *noor*, and to be further transformed. ■

## The Bridge of Language

By Prof. Shlomo Alon

*[This article comprises the presentation delivered by Prof. Shlomo Alon at the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society' annual convention – titled "Building Bridges: Lessons on Civility and Religious Harmony in Times of Intolerance and Conflict" – held in Columbus, Ohio on October 6, 2018. In addition to presentations on lessons on civility and religious harmony, examples of works engaged in to build bridges between people of different faiths through respectful dialogue were also highlighted at the symposium. Prof. Alon (Former Head of Arabic Studies for Israel's Ministry of Education) spoke about his life-long love of the Arabic language and how he has utilized his expertise in Arabic to facilitate better understanding between Jews and Arabs. In this presentation, Prof. Alon also explains how his most recent project – translating the English translation and commentary of the Holy Quran by Maulana Muhammad Ali into Hebrew – is the pinnacle of his years of work in pursuit of this goal. The video recording of the presentations from the symposium are available on the LAIS YouTube page, at: [youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IVBGtc\\_2R5LrAAVjyxe9xoEjraFPnB](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IVBGtc_2R5LrAAVjyxe9xoEjraFPnB).]*

Dear friends, I'm so excited to be here for the second time with the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society and to share with you my feelings and my work for interfaith harmony around the globe and, above all, to share about my work in translating the Holy Quran and the unique commentary by Maulana Muhammad Ali into Hebrew, the ancient language of the Bible. Thank you Samina, Noman and Fazeel for making it possible with your kindness and generosity.

Let me introduce myself. I was born in Tel Aviv in

1944, before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. My parents were the only 2 persons in my family who survived the second world war in Europe. I had grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins, none of them survived. When I was 14 years old, I was introduced to the Arabic language at a Jewish highschool in Tel Aviv. It was not that common and popular at those days. I was attracted to the language through a fascinating teacher, who was Jewish, from East Europe. I fell in love with the language and mostly with the classical language of the Holy Quran and Hadith. My parents were not too happy with this passion of mine. They expected me to pursue Jewish religious studies. One individual teacher changed my life.

After studying in the Hebrew University for a B.A. degree in Arabic language, Middle Eastern Studies and Teaching Certificate, I became a teacher in highschools by the end of 1968. I strived and worked very hard, completed my M.A. degree in Arabic and was promoted to teach in Universities and became a part time Supervisor for Arabic at Jewish Hebrew schools in Jerusalem, and later on all around Israel. This was a major turning point in my life. I understood that the language goes with the culture, the heritage and history of the speakers of Arabic. Understanding this made me determine to become involved in the interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Jews in the Holy Land and around the globe. The Golden Ages for Jews and Muslims in the Middle Ages, in Spain and North Africa, ages of living together, of intellectual prosperity, are a glorious reminder for what we might achieve nowadays too.

In the years to come I became very active in Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East and in other places around the world. I was elected to serve on the Board of the The International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) and on the Board of The United Religions Initiative (URI) and was elected in both international associations as the Vice President. I believe that this is the way to establish bridges between human beings – working together without any difference to race, national origin, denominations, and gender. Everyone was created by the Divine Power, through Adam and Eve.

All this became, to my great fortune, the background for work in translating the Quran and the Commentary of Maulana Muhammad Ali from English into Hebrew. I was very fortunate to meet Samina and Norman at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Salt Lake City three years ago. We had a very inspiring meeting which ended in my decision to devote my energy and experience in translating the great work of Maulana Muhammad Ali from English into Hebrew. This work

was challenging and an utmost responsibility. The Holy Quran was translated a few times in the past from Arabic to Hebrew, but this was the first time it was being translated with commentary from English into Hebrew.

The work of Maulana is a unique achievement in his accuracy of the translation and the profound understanding of the essence of the Quranic text, as is revealed in his detailed explanatory notes. As a researcher of Arabic Lexicography in the Middle Ages, I was very impressed with mastery of Maulana's familiarity and understanding of the classical works of Ibn Manzur, Alfairuzabadi, Murtada al-Zabidi, Lane and others, and the way he employed them in his commentary. The Maulana's translation and the commentary is a great work of a true Muslim scholar, with profound reverence to the other two divine religions – Judaism and Christianity.

There are many important issues explained by Maulana in his work. For instance: the plea of Angels to G-od (Sura 2); how creation begins and then is repeated (Sura 10); the concept of evil (Sura 4); the true significance of forgiveness (Sura 2); the understanding of Unity of G-od (Sura 2, 6, 16); the story of Moses and his people (Sura 2); the concept of prophethood (Sura 2); what Satan truly is (Sura 2, 4, 24); and meaning of 'the will of G-od' (Sura 10). These are only a sample of the deep discussions of Maulana in his commentary, but important examples that can interest Jewish people, who read Hebrew, to better understand the great mind of Maulana as a true representative of Muslim modern thinking and belief. This also represents my deep and sincere wish, that by translating the commentary of Maulana into modern Hebrew, Jewish people, in Israel and around the world, will better know their Muslim neighbors and thereby realize constructive ways of thinking to build new bridges of interfaith relations and religious harmony in the Middle East and around the world.

To conclude, this conference and the previous one that I attended last year in Columbus, gives me a lot of hope and deep desire. It instills in me the belief that religion can be the key constructive element to bring human beings and closer to the true belief and understanding about the Almighty through his Holy Scriptures. This I believe will create a better era of friendship and love for all, women and men, adults and children, from all different denominations. It is possible, and not just a dream. I'm convinced that your efforts, dear Samina, Noman, Fazeel and all others in the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, are bringing us closer to achieve this goal in our lives. Thank you all for your kind listening. ■

## Closing Address: A Theology of Respect and Acceptance

By Dr. Mohammed Ahmad

*[This article comprises the Closing Address presented by Dr. Mohammed Ahmad at the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society's annual convention – titled "Building Bridges: Lessons on Civility and Religious Harmony in Times of Intolerance and Conflict" – held in Columbus, Ohio on October 6, 2018. In these closing remarks, Dr. Ahmad highlights distinguishing characteristics of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement which facilitate interfaith bridge building. He also explains how key features of the Movement provide a basis for intra-faith peace and harmony. The video recording of the presentations from the symposium are available on the LAIS YouTube page, at: [youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IVBGtc\\_2R5LrAAVjyxe9xoEjraFPnB](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IVBGtc_2R5LrAAVjyxe9xoEjraFPnB).]*

Ladies and gentlemen, Asalaamoalaikum. May the Author of Peace be with all of you. I begin in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Thank you for attending our program today and I hope that you found it beneficial. I will be sharing with you some remarks to bring this program to a close.

I want to begin by giving you a brief introduction to the Lahore Ahmadiyya movement. As a spiritual organization, it aims at bringing about peace in the world and it does this principally through dialogue. It is known for being the forerunner in introducing Islam to the West through its missions and publications. It produced the first English translation and commentary of the Holy Quran that became accessible to the West. It also established the first missions from which people learned about Islam in Europe, namely at Woking, England and Berlin, Germany. And it continues this legacy of work today through its translation and publication work.

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement is also very unique in that it advances distinguishing characteristics that facilitate bridge building and understanding between diverse faith communities. I would like to highlight some of these for you today.

The foundation of its theology is based on spiritual development. Salvation is understood as *not* being about simply believing certain things or belonging to a certain group, but rather living a life in which one is God-like in their actions. In other words, salvation is attained when one's life reflects the attributes (or coloring) of God. Accordingly, salvation is not limited only to Muslims; rather salvation is dependent on the condi-

tion of one's soul, regardless of any particular faith tradition. In this manner, we affirm the Quranic principle:

Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in God and the Last Day and does good, they have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve. – (2:62)

We also believe in the founders of all religions as great prophets and messengers of God. As the Quran states:

And certainly We raised in every nation a messenger. – (16:36)

This acceptance of messengers in every nation extends to belief in those holy personages who are not expressly mentioned in the Quran, like Krishna and Buddha for example. We also consider Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh religion, to be a noble and saintly person.

Regarding “intra-faith” harmony, we believe that anyone who recites the *kalimah* (formula of faith) – “No

one deserves to be served besides Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah” – must be accepted as a Muslim. Likewise, we believe that engaging in the practice of *takfir* (expelling Muslims from Islam based on differences of opinion) is strictly forbidden.

In fact, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, formed this organization on the basis of civil dialogue and engagement. He clarified that the term “jihad” is not synonymous with “holy war”, but rather signifies “striving hard to better a condition”. And he put this understanding of the term jihad into practice by striving to better the spiritual condition of people through his words in lectures and debates as well as in writing of books (over 80 of them). He coined the phrase “jihad with the pen”, and it is this great legacy of peaceful engagement that we continue today.

Thank you for your participation today. I wish you a pleasant evening and May God bless you all. Amen. ■

## TAKE THE CIVILITY PLEDGE



1. **Seek out a variety of reliable news sources with different perspectives** in order to learn more about the forces that divide - and also unite - our country.
2. **Listen respectfully** to people who have views different than my own, be mindful to **avoid stereotyping and not use language that is insulting or derogatory.**
3. **Encourage and support efforts to bring people of different points of view together** in our community to have civil and respectful conversations.
4. **Invite other people to join the Initiative to Revive Civility** and get involved in helping to connect people across political divisions.

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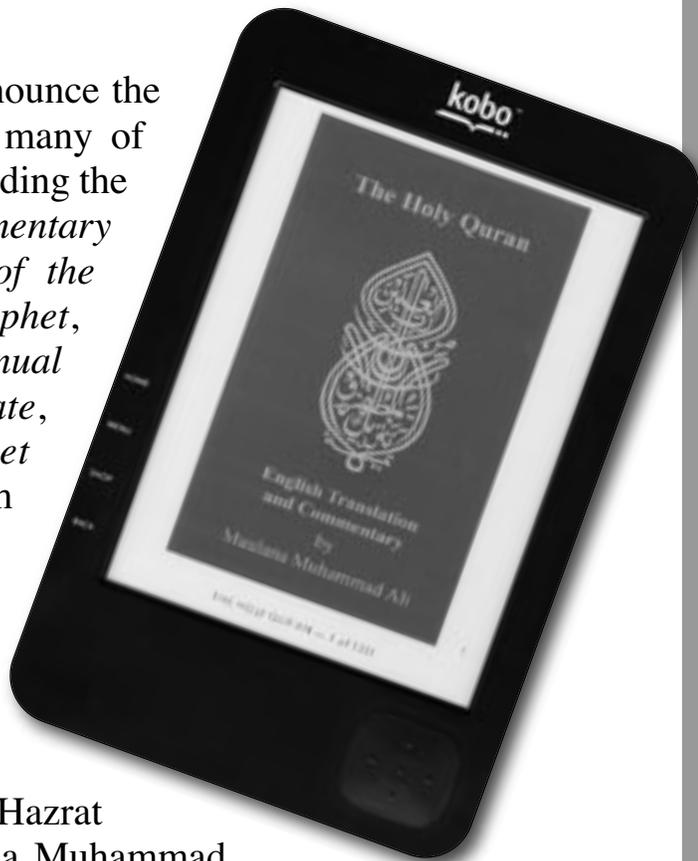
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(81:10)

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