

*“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 eighty years**

July – September 2008

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.

Vol. 85

CONTENTS

No. 3

<i>Reclaiming Islam</i>	3
<i>Exposing the Untruths of Extremist Propaganda</i>	
By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.	
<i>Abraham and the True Concept of Prayer</i>	10
By Sadru Dean Sahukhan, Esq.	
<i>Ramadan Messages</i>	12
<i>A gesture of good-will and an opportunity for peace-building</i>	
Compiled by the Editor	
<i>Abrogation versus Interpretation</i>	17
<i>Assessing Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's view on the Islamic concept of "Jihad"</i>	
By Maulana Muhammad Ali	

Published on the World-Wide Web at: www.muslim.org

احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

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

P.O. Box 3370, Dublin, Ohio 43016, 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.

ISSN: 1060-4596

Editor: Fazeel S. Khan

Assistant Editor: Fatima Z. Rahman

Circulation: Mrs. Samina Malik.

Contact information:

'The Light', P.O. Box 3370, Dublin, Ohio 43016, U.S.A.

Phone: 614 – 873 1030 • Fax: 614 – 873 1022

E-mails: aaail@aol.com

Website: www.muslim.org

The main objective of the A.A.I.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	

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.

Reclaiming Islam

Exposing the Untruths of Extremist Propaganda

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

[This article is based on a presentation given at the Faculty Club of the Ohio State University as part of the Torch Club lecture series. The Torch Club is a national civic organization in which professionals from the community – university professors, attorneys, judges, etc. – meet in fellowship once a month for the purpose of learning from one another. In the presentation, the Editor addresses the reality of Islam being perceived in the West as a violent and intolerant faith, far from a religion of peace. He explains this view is primarily the result of the violent acts and widespread propaganda by extremists, who claim that Islam is the source of their beliefs and agendas. The Editor proves the invalidity of these claims using the extremists' views on jihad, apostasy and democracy as illustrations.]

Introduction

The title of my presentation this evening is “Reclaiming Islam: Exposing the Untruths of Extremist Propaganda”. The word “Islam” is derived from the Arabic word “silm”, meaning “peace”. It is neither named after the religion’s founder nor the place from which it originated as is the case with other faiths, but rather is titled after the objective to which it aspires. The attainment of peace – within the individual, amongst people, and between man and God – is the lofty goal Islam prescribes as the very purpose of life. Today, however, far from a religion of peace, Islam is perceived in the West as a violent and intolerant faith that is incompatible with the civil, democratic ideals accepted by the modern world. A Washing Post / ABC News poll conducted in March 2006 found that a full third of Americans — 33% — believe mainstream Islam encourages violence against non-Muslims.¹ There is no doubt, this view is primarily sustained due to the violent acts and widespread propaganda of extremists who profess that it is a strict adherence to the principles of Islam that justifies their beliefs and agendas.

Is there any legitimacy to the extremists’ rationale? Can the primary sources of Islam be reasonably interpreted in a manner supporting their violent acts and crude convictions? Are the so-called “moderate” Muslims of today the real distorters of the Islamic faith, having strayed from the religion taught by the Prophet Muhammad and practiced by the early Muslims? Answering these questions does more than

merely distinguish between good Muslims and bad Muslims. In fact, affirmatively resolving this issue can offer the most vital ammunition in the global war on terror by defeating extremists at their very core.

And what do I mean by this? Recently the *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* identified **ideology** as the “center of gravity” of Islamic extremist groups, like Al Qaeda.² Commenting on this noteworthy finding, Dale Eikmeier of the US Army War College’s Center for Strategic Leadership states:

The identification of an ideology [by the NMSP-WOT] as the center of gravity rather than an individual or group is a significant shift from a “capture and kill” philosophy to a strategy focused on defeating the root cause of terrorism. Accordingly, the plan’s principal focus is on attacking and countering an ideology that fuels Islamic terrorism.³

Thus, it is recognized that defeating terrorism entails attacking the ideology upon which terrorists’ base their causes. Unfortunately, the plan neither identifies the ideology, other than simply labeling it “extremist”, nor does it provide any guidance as to how the ideology is to be combated. My objective this evening is to fill this void. I’ll identify three common extremist views and prove their illegitimacy from the most authoritative sources of Islam.

What is Islam?

In order to appreciate how erroneous the views of extremists’ are, a basic understanding of what the religion of Islam actually entails is required. So I’d like to spend the first few minutes providing a brief sketch, a crash course if you will, on what Islam is.

Islam is a **monotheistic faith** in the purest sense of the term. It teaches there is only One God, Who has no associate or companion. The Quran, the Holy Scripture of Islam, acknowledges Abraham as the archetype of this monotheistic faith. Abraham is repeatedly pointed out as comprehending that the True, Supreme, All-Powerful, Perfect God is One, and that it is to this One God that man is to submit himself completely. And it is this Abrahamic model of faith that Islam endeavors to reestablish:

God speaks the truth; so follow the religion of Abraham, the upright one. And he (Abraham) was not one of the polytheists (3:95).

And who is better in religion than he who submits himself entirely to God while doing good (to others) and follows the faith of Abraham, the upright one? And God took Abraham for a friend (4:125).

As for me, my Lord has guided me to the right path — a right religion, the faith of Abraham, the upright one, and he (Abraham) was not of the polytheists (6:161).

In Islam, God is also understood as that “Being possessing all the perfect attributes”. In the first Chapter of the Quran, titled “The Opening”, the chief attributes of God are introduced. We are told that He is “Rabb”, which means He is not only the Creator, but also the Provider and Nourisher for all. We are told that He is “Rahman”, which means He is All-Beneficent in that He has so much love for His creation that He provides his blessings to all, no matter how unmerited or undeserved. We are told that He is “Raheem”, which means He is All-Merciful in that He rewards the doing of good abundantly, manifold times over. And we are told He is “Malik”, which means He is the True Master of Judgment in that His punishment is always for reformation of the individual and never on account of anger for wrongdoing.

Muhammad, on the other hand, is regarded as only one of the prophets of God, a mortal and in no way himself divine. In fact, a Muslim must not only believe in the prophethood of Muhammad, but in all the prophets and messengers of God:

We believe in God and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and (in) that which was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and (in) that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, we do not make any distinction between any of them ... (2:136)

The only difference between Muhammad and the other prophets is that Muhammad is uniquely referred to in the Quran as “*khatam-an nabiyyin*”, meaning the “seal of the prophets”:

Muhamad is not the father of any of your men (i.e. he has no sons to be his heir), but he is the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets ... (33:40).

What this title refers to is the “scope” of Prophet Muhammad’s mission. According to Islam, the prophets and messengers before him were each given teachings for their respective nations and for the specific conditions the people of those nations faced at the time. Muhammad, Muslims believe, is the last of the prophets, who was revealed the final and complete message from God, a message for all nations and all times:

Say (Muhammad): O Mankind, surely I am the Messenger of God to you all (7:158)

And We have not sent thee (Muhammad) but as a bearer of good news and as a warner to all mankind (34:28).

As I have already mentioned, Islam is derived from the Arabic word “silm”, meaning “peace”, and the attainment of peace is the defining characteristic of the faith:

O you who believe, enter into complete peace. (2:208)

And God invites to the abode of peace. (10:25)

And how is this peace to be achieved? Well, the Quran states that the human “soul” is the “**spirit of God**” breathed into man:

Then He (God) made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit, and gave you ears and eyes and hearts. (32:9)

The spirit of God within man is indicative of the divine attributes existing within the individual. And it is through the doing of good works only that these attributes may be developed. Thus, in Islam, religion is not treated as a dogma which man must accept to escape punishment in the hereafter. Rather, the primary concern is with this life, not the next; that man, through a righteous life here on earth, may attain closeness to God:

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but righteous is the one who believes in God, and the Day of Reckoning, and the angels and the scriptures and the prophets, and gives away wealth our of love for Him (God) to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and to set slaves free, and keeps up prayer and pays the poor-rate; and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in the time of conflict. These are they who are truthful, and these are they who keep their duty. (2:177)

This is salvation in Islam! Heaven is a spiritual state in which one attains closeness to God by developing the divine attributes within him through the doing of good works. The Holy Quran refers to the person who has achieved this state of total peace and contentment as the “**soul at rest**”:

O soul that art at rest,
Return to your Lord, well pleased,
well pleasing,
So enter among My servants,
And enter My Garden. (89:27-30)

Extremists' views

What I have just presented before you are the fundamentals of Islam. Despite these fundamentals, extremists would have us believe that Islam, the faith founded on the principles of peace, spirituality, and the doing of good to others, advocates violence, intolerance, and domination of others. Common sense alone dictates the rejection of such a supposition.

Islam is certainly not the *raison d'être* for extremists' beliefs and agendas. Take for example the Palestinian groups. Certainly the struggle against Israeli occupation is their paramount concern, clearly a more nationalistic than religious motivation. With Egyptian groups, the focus is primarily on internal governance of the country. For Pakistani groups, the motivation is overwhelmingly based on a desire to control Kashmir. For Chechan groups, independence from Russia is the basis of their conflict. Clearly, Islam is a mere pretext for the extremists' geopolitical grievances and ambitions.⁴ And this point is made even clearer when we assess the merits of specific extremist views. So, let's take a look at them.

Extremist view #1 – Re: Jihad

Extremists believe that *Jihad* is a religious duty that involves engaging in a "holy war" with non-Muslims for the purpose of spreading Islam throughout the world. In order to judge the validity of this view, the definition of "Jihad" must first be understood.

The Arabic word "jihad" means "**striving hard**". It implies an exertion on one's part to the best of his or her ability for the purpose of improving something. Accordingly, a laborer working hard to support his or her family is a "jihad". A father or mother working hard to raise their children properly is a "jihad". A student working hard to earn a degree for the purpose of contributing to society in a positive way is a "jihad".

The Quran mentions 4 ways specifically that a Muslim should "strive hard":

It recognizes the need to strive hard to attain nearness to God by leading a righteous life: "Those who strive hard towards Us, We certainly guide them in Our ways. And God is surely with the doers of good". (29:69)

It recognizes the need to strive hard to remain true to Islam under difficult and trying circumstances, such as when being persecuted because of one's faith: "To those who flee after they are persecuted, then strive hard and are patient, surely your Lord after that is Protecting, Merciful". (16:110)

It recognizes the need to strive hard to present the truths, the evidences and the beauty of the Quran to those unaware or disproving of it: "Strive hard against

them (non-Muslims) a mighty striving with it (Quran)". (25:52) In Islam, Muslims are not to shy away from engaging in discourse about their faith and debating the merits of their beliefs. But this is to be done in the most civil manner possible: "Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation and debate with people in the best manner". (16:125)

It is quite apparent that these first three forms of "jihad" stipulated in the Quran reveal that the term is used to connote being aligned with the truth: that is, being true to one's self, by improving one's moral condition, being true to God by not denying His message under pressure and presenting the truth to others by way of civil discourse. It is in this general sense of the term that Prophet Muhammad declared: "The most excellent jihad is to say a word of truth before an unjust ruler".⁵

Now, there is a fourth way in which the Quran states Muslims should "strive". It recognizes the need to strive hard with property and lives to defend the Muslim community at times of war: "Go forth, light and heavy, and strive hard in God's way with your wealth and your lives" (9:41).

Obviously, it is this fourth form of jihad that extremists exploit for their political purposes. What is the context in which this verse is to be interpreted? Surely, one would expect it to bear some affinity to the general manner in which the other forms of jihad are used; that is, to stand for the truth by exerting one's efforts to improve a condition. And that is exactly how it was applied by Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslims.

Every student of Islamic history knows Prophet Muhammad and his companions were subjected to the severest forms of persecution in Mecca from the faith's inception. But they bore it all with patience, a form of jihad as mentioned earlier. Over a hundred of them had to flee for their lives to Abyssinia, but persecution persisted. Ultimately, the entire Muslim population left their homes in Mecca and took refuge in Medina. Even this did not stop the hostilities against them; the Meccans were intent on exterminating this new religion that sought to empower the weaker members of society – the poor, the orphans, women and the elderly – which was an obvious threat to their hegemony. It was at this juncture only, in defense of the existence of their faith, the Quran permitted the Muslims to fight back:

Permission (to fight) is given to those on whom war is made, because they are oppressed. (22:39)

It is axiomatic that taking up arms was the last available option. It was out of sheer necessity, only in

the case of defending themselves from “**oppression**” that it was permitted for Muslims to fight.

Now, extremists may claim that there are examples of Muslims being oppressed around the world and this warrants engaging in war. The Muslims in Palestine under Israeli occupation is routinely pointed out as an example. However, the very verse after the one quoted above goes on to explain what exactly is meant by “oppression”. It further clarifies:

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. (22:40)

Thus, the permission to fight is conditioned upon facing “oppression” in terms of one’s religious rights being denied. It is to safeguard religious freedom for all, to protect churches, synagogues and mosques, that warrants fighting in Islam. There is not the slightest basis for the view that fighting may be engaged in to compel anyone to accept to Islam or to expand the territory of the Islamic nation. The Holy Quran is explicit about the “**defensive nature**” of war:

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

Moreover, if aggression ceases and the enemy offers peace, it is obligatory upon Muslims to accept it and halt all warfare:

And if they incline to peace, you must also incline to it, and trust in God ... (8:61)

The concept of a “**just war**”, a concept unanimously understood, accepted and applied in the modern, civilized world, has never so clearly been defined in any religious scripture. The unconditional, aggressive view of war for the purpose of advancement of the Muslim territory, clearly, has no basis whatsoever in Islamic sources.

Extremist view #2 – Re: Apostasy

Just as in the case with the extremist view on jihad, the extremist view on apostasy is completely without merit. It is held by extremists that an apostate, one who rejects Islam after having accepted it, is subject to the death penalty. Unfortunately, this view is widely propagated, so much so that the issue has been raised in western media as of late, regarding how the Muslim world would receive Barack Obama should he become President since he may have been a

Muslim in his early childhood but is now a self-professed Christian and, therefore, may be considered an apostate and be subject to the death penalty.

This particular extremist view flies in the face of one of the greatest contributions Islam has made to the world; that is, establishing the basis for complete **religious freedom**. The Quran, a book revealed in the 6th century, laid down the *magna charta* of religious liberty by declaring:

There is no compulsion in religion. (2:256)

Religion is stated to be a personal matter, not something that can be forced upon anyone. The Quran explains this further by stating:

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

In fact, the Quran explains that God has provided man with “**free will**”, and accordingly, it is only natural that not everyone will believe, and suggests that “forcing” one to believe is going against God’s law:

And if your Lord had pleased, all those who are in the earth would have believed, all of them. Will you then force them till they are believers? (10:99)

So from where did the belief that apostates must be put to death arise? Extremists exploit the fact that there are records of some persons who left the Muslim community and who happened to be killed at a later time. But the question is: were any of these individuals killed simply because they were apostates? Nowhere in the Quran is it mentioned that an apostate is to be put the death. Actually, it sanctions no punishment at all in this life as it states such persons will be held to account in the hereafter only. It is inconceivable that these particular persons were killed simply because they were apostates, as the Quran, some of the verses of which I relayed earlier, advocates complete freedom in matters of faith.

Extremists, however, overlook the fact that when an apostate happened to be killed it was always when such person joined enemy forces at times of war. Thus, when an apostate happened to be killed it was not because he left Islam, but because he was an “**enemy combatant**”. In fact, the Quran expressly states that those who leave Islam and are peaceful towards the Muslims, no harm should be brought against them:

So if they withdraw from you and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then God allows you know way against them ... (4:90)

Clearly, it was the “**treasonous**” acts of certain apostates that led to their deaths, not the fact that they chose to leave Islam. The intolerant, hostile view that apostates are to be put to death, has not basis whatsoever in Islamic sources.

Extremist view #3 – Democracy

As in the case with the extremists’ view on jihad and apostasy, the extremist view that Islam and democracy are incompatible is wholly unfounded. Far from it, a study of the Quran and an examination of the practices of the early Muslims reveal that not only are the principles of governance in Islam compatible with “democratic” values, Islam is the very religion of democracy. In fact, it is clearly a departure from the Islamic principles of governance that is the primary cause of the creation of autocratic regimes in the Muslim world.

A general consensus may be reached in defining democracy, in simple terms, as a system of governance wherein: 1) majority opinion is accepted, and 2) individual rights are protected. Both these criteria find explicit support in the Quran.

Majority Rule

For instance, the essence of “majority rule” is openly declared in the Quran in the following verse:

And those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer, and whose affairs are decided by counsel among themselves ... (42:38)

In this verse we find the foundation for a **government by counsel**, or a **parliamentary government**. Clearly, in Islam, the people are not to be ruled by the whim of one person, but rather are to be consulted, or have their representatives consulted, as to how the affairs of public life are to be conducted. This principle was put into practice by no other than Muhammad himself. Recorded history bears witness to him not only engaging in consultative processes with regard to administrative matters and state affairs, but also accepting the majority view despite his personal opinion at times being to the contrary. In fact, Muhammad was expressly commanded to “consult them in important matters” (3:158).

Furthermore, the Quran encourages the “majority rule” style government by laying the foundation for a “**participatory system**”. It states:

God changes not the condition of a people, until they change their own condition. (13:11)

And follow not that of which you have no knowledge. (17:36)

Clearly, the Quran explains that the rules and con-

ventions of a society are not to be blindly followed, but rather active participation is required by the people to bring about change and improvement of the populace’s interest. Moreover, the Quran expressly states that an important function of this participatory system of government is the “**election**” of the people’s representatives:

Surely God commands you (the people) to make over positions of trust (in government and state affairs) to those worthy of them. (4:58)

Thus, it is the people, the general public, who possess the authority to make someone their representative. And this principle was practically demonstrated in the early history of Islam by the Muslims “electing” the first four *Califphs* (i.e. heads of state after Muhammad) either by agreement of all parties, by nomination after consultation with leading representatives of the community, or by appointment by an elective council. Furthermore, the chosen representative is accountable to the people, being in a position of “trust”. Thus, governance in Islam is a “**contract**” between the people and their representatives; the people hand over authority to their representatives and the representatives administer control in the best interest of the people within the limits of their mandate. As Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, stated in his first public address after being elected successor to Muhammad:

You have elected me *Khalifa* (head of state), but I claim no superiority over you ... Help me if I act rightly and correct me if I take a wrong course ... Obey me so long as I obey the laws and regulations. In case I disobey the laws and regulations, I have no right to obedience from you.

Thus, the concepts of a “**social contract**” between the people and the government and the “**rule of law**” where leaders are accountable to the people for their actions, are entrenched principles in Islam.

Individual Rights

Similarly, the fundamental elements of the notion of “individual rights” are unequivocally upheld in Islam. First, the Quran champions the **equality** of mankind:

All men are a single nation. (2:213)

It then defines various rights individuals are guaranteed. As already mentioned, Islam calls for complete religious freedom: “There is no compulsion in matters of religion” (2:256). Similarly, it condemns blind following and stresses the importance of “**freedom of knowledge and conscience**”. It repeatedly instructs man to “reflect” and “ponder” so that an “understanding” of the issues may be achieved that satisfies one’s conscience:

Thus does God make clear to you the messages that you may ponder. (2:219)

There is surely a sign in this for a people who ponder. (16:67)

Are the blind and the seeing alike? Do you not then reflect? (6:50)

So relate the narrative that they may reflect. (7:176)

And whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good. (2:269)

And “free thought” was not only protected, the **right to express** that thought was guaranteed. As an example, Umar, the second Caliph, announced in a public address that he intended to place a restriction on the amount of dowry that grooms gave to their brides so as to prevent extravagance and unnecessary competition within the community. A woman from amongst the crowd of citizens openly spoke out against him by stating that he could not place a limit on God had not limited and quoted the Quran in support of her view. Umar considered what she said and seeing the correctness of her view replied: “The women of Medina have more knowledge than I.” Though a simple incident, it delineates a very important precept: an average citizen was free to form an opinion and express it freely to the leader of the community; in return, the leader calmly considered the input and seeing that it was true, accepted it.

Equality amongst the sexes is also a constant theme throughout the Quran. The Quran repeatedly expressly mentions “women” along with “men” so as to leave no doubt as to their equal status, spiritually as well as materially:

Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the charitable men and the charitable women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard, and the men who remember God much and women who remember — God has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward. (33:35)

Even the economic independence of the sexes is advanced:

For men is the benefit of what they earn. And for women the benefit of what they earn. (4:32).

In addition, women were granted the right to inheritance, the right to property ownership and every other individual right granted to man. Keep in mind, this was all in the 6th century.

Major Obstacle: Forgetting “Ijtihad”

Clearly, the foundational components underlying a democratic form of government share many commonalities with entrenched Islamic principles governing statehood. So why the bitter opposition from extremists? Extremists argue that “democracy” is a system of governance in which laws are based on human whim, whereas Islam is transcendental and its principles cannot be undermined by the will of the people. This view is unwarranted for it neglects that *ijtihad* (the exercise of judgment) is a fundamental source of law in Islam. Islam does recognize the Quran and the Sunnah (the practices of the Prophet Muhammad) as higher sources of authority, but at the same time expects the exercise of judgment to be used to apply these basic, broad principles. This is in fact comparable to the authority granted to the legislature in a “constitutional democracy”: the legislature uses its best judgment in creating laws but the laws validity is conditional upon its consistency with the broader principles contained in the supreme law of the land, the constitution.

The four great jurists of Islam, Imams Abu Hanifah, Malik, Shafi and Ahmad, have defined various methods of exercising judgment in creating laws.

- There is “*qiyas*”, or using analogical reasoning to form a decision.
- There is “*istihsan*”, or adopting a rule that is in consonance with the broader rules of justice.
- There is “*istislah*”, or creating a rule conducive to the general societal goals.
- There is also “*istidlal*”, or applying inferences from customs and usages.

These four methods of exercising judgment lay the basis for the creation of laws by a legislative body. And the prime example of the use of legislative authority is the formation of the “**Constitution of Medina**”. This compact, created in 622 C.E., was the first written constitution of a state ever promulgated by a sovereign in human history! It created a city-state in Medina. It acknowledged various parties bound by the treaty. It granted equal rights to the participating parties. And it outlined societal rules of conduct that would ensure the social welfare of the community. Most significant is the fact that it was an agreement catered to satisfy the needs of all participating parties

in the community (namely, the immigrant Muslims from Mecca, the indigenous Muslims from Medina, and the Arab Jews of Medina). The rights, conditions and role of leadership stipulated therein were all consented to by the party signatories. Consensual, participatory governance was central to this historic, democratic document. Clearly, the extremist view that Islam does not permit man to use the exercise of his judgment to create systems of governance wherein the basic concepts of majority rule and individual rights are established is without any merit.

Conclusion

Now, I ask you in all fairness, does the faith I presented before you seem inherently incompatible with the values accepted by the modern, civilized world? Can the current day conflicts really be characterized as a “clash of civilizations” between the secular West and Islam? When we look to the fundamentals of Islam, common sense dictates “No”! When analyzing specific extremist views, we see Islam is:

- a faith that encourages mediation of disputes and places strict limitations and conditions on engaging in conflicts;
- a faith establishing freedom of religion and equality for all;
- and a faith advocating a “majority rule” type of government in which leaders are chosen by the people and are held to account for their actions;

Certainly there is no inconsistency there. My friends, Islam is not the *problem*. Rather, a correct understanding of Islam can be the *solution* to combatting extremism in the Muslim world. Extremists need to be stripped of the “garb of Islam” they have been wearing to address their political grievances. As Professor David Forte of Cleveland Marshal School of Law states: “We must not fail ... to distinguish between the homicidal revolutionaries like bin Laden and mainstream Muslim believers”⁶ Using terms like “Islamic Fundamentalism” or “Islamofacism” when referring to the extremists’ views only legitimate their cause.

And certainly Muslims have the primary responsibility in refuting the ideologies of extremists. And this is what the Islamic organization I belong to has been doing, not since 9-11, but for the past 100 years. We produce a translation and commentary of the Quran that specifically addresses the illegitimacy of the extremist views. This work is of such scholarship and quality that all of the largest retail outlets including Borders and Barnes & Noble carry them and several universities use them as text books in Islamic

studies classes. But we also direct our focus on having this work and others translated in various languages of the world and distributed for free in foreign countries so that the ordinary people may have the opportunity to learn about their religion for themselves in their own language and not rely on some politically motivated Imam telling them what the Arabic sources of Islam state. Recently, we distributed over 50,000 copies of our Russian translation and commentary of the Quran in Russia and other Central Asian countries where we believe there may be a danger of extremist views spreading due to a lack of correct information about Islam. And we have also directed our attention to the Middle East. We have had most of our literature translated into Arabic and certified by Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, which is widely recognized as the most authoritative institution in the Islamic world. Al-Azhar’s certification gives our literature a stamp of authenticity and, thus, helps facilitate our goal of proving to the uninformed that the extremists’ views are *un-Islamic*. We also are in the process of creating learning centers in various foreign countries, including Kyrgyzstan, Philippines and Albania. These centers – containing libraries, multimedia, lecture halls, etc. – will provide local populations with a place where religion *sans* politics may be studied and discussed.

Certainly, a lot more needs to be done. It is our earnest prayer that these efforts to “Reclaim Islam” will result in the eradication of extremist ideologies amongst Muslims and help facilitate peace in the world. ■

- 1 Washington Post – ABC News Poll, The Washington Post, March 6, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/includes/postpoll_iraqwar_030606.htm.
- 2 Strange, Joe, Center of Gravity: Primary Sources of Moral or Physical Strength, Power, and Resistance, Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities (Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps Univ. Foundation, 1996), p. ix.
- 3 Eikmeier, Dale, Qutbism: An Ideology of Islamic-Fascism, Parameters, Spring 2007, p.85-98, at 85.
- 4 In Dying to Win: the strategic logic of suicide terrorism, Robert A. Pape creates the first comprehensive database of every suicide terrorist attacks in the world from 1980 until today. His work shows “Suicide terrorism is not primarily a product of Islamic fundamentalism”, and “Every suicide terrorist campaign has had a clear goal that is secular and political: to compel a modern democracy to withdraw military forces from the territory that the terrorists view as their homeland”. Pape, Robert A., Dying to Win: the Strategic logic of suicide terrorism, New York: Random House.
- 5 Tirmidhi, Abwab-ul-Fitan.
- 6 Forte, David, Religion is not the Enemy: Don’t look at Bin Laden and See Islam, National Review Online, October 19, 2001, <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=ZmRmYzJjNDkwNTgxMjA1OWMzY2UwNTcyOWQ2MmJmYTk=>.

Abraham and the True Concept of Prayer

By Sadru Dean Sahukhan, Esq.

[This article was presented at the Symposium on “The Faith of Abraham” held in Columbus, Ohio in conjunction with the U.S. branch of The Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society’s 2007 annual convention. In this article, Mr. Sahukhan explains that the true purpose of prayer in Islam is to engage in active communication with God. He further outlines two fundamental concepts upon which the correct application of prayer rests: 1) belief in the Unity of God, and 2) belief in God being a Living Entity. Finally, Mr. Sahukhan applies these lessons to the life of Prophet Abraham, thereby establishing that Islam attempts to reaffirm the concept of prayer practiced by Abraham, the Patriarch of organized religion.]

Prayer is a common institution in all religions. In Islam, though, it has a particular meaning: it is understood as an active communication with God. Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him (PBUH), said:

When one of you says prayers, he holds confidential discourse with his Lord. (Bukhari 9:8)

But what is the reason to pray? The Holy Quran provides the purpose of prayer by stating:

... keep up prayer. Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil; and the remembrance of God is the greatest force. (29:45)

Thus, in Islam, prayer is the means by which one purifies him/herself and becomes closer to God.

The Purpose and Practical Application of Prayer

In order to fully appreciate this purpose of prayer (i.e. to attain a closer relationship with the divine) one must understand two fundamental concepts: first, God is One, and second, God is a living entity Who hears and answers one’s supplications.

The Holy Quran states:

Say He Allah is One. (112:1)

Islam, in essence, entails totally submitting to the will of God, the One and only God who does not have any associates or partners. Accordingly, there is no concept of deity in Islam. The God of the Holy Qur’an is not a tribal God; he does not belong to any particular group, country or nation. He is the God of all the nations. Concentrating exclusively on the Divine during our prayer allows us to realize that

God Almighty is wholly and solely entitled to our devotion and deserves to be worshipped. Accordingly, the notion of “concentration” is paramount. And this notion of concentration leads us to the important concept of Unity of God. In the words of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the 14th century Mujadid (reformer):

One has to turn to Him with such exclusive devotion and sincerity as to regard all beside Him as dead.

Similarly, Maulana Muhammad Ali in “The Religion of Islam” writes:

The Islamic mode of worship is calculated to concentrate attention on one object, the realization of Divine presence. The prayer is thus an undisturbed meditation on the Divine ...

Being a prerequisite to understanding and appreciating the true concept of prayer in Islam, the very first chapter of the Holy Quran requires Muslims to pray:

Thee (alone) do we serve and Thee (alone) do we beseech for help (seek guidance from).

Furthermore, prayer awakens in us the awareness that God Almighty is responsive to us. He is not an inactive, helpless and passive institution. He is a listening and a helping God. In Islam, it is made abundantly clear that a petitioner, whilst praying, speaks with God and is spoken to by Him. In other words God Almighty is a “living entity”. He hears and answers His suppliants’ pleas. We are told in the Holy Quran:

Call on me I will accept your prayer. (40:60)

It also states:

And when My servants ask thee concerning Me, surely I am nigh. *I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should hear My call* and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way. (2:186)

By stating, “when my servants ask thee concerning Me” we are shown that it is the process of trying to “know” God that results in God manifesting Himself to the suppliant. One tries to “know” God by understanding what his attributes comprise or entail. In Islam, this is facilitated through prayer, a daily routine of analysis of God’s attributes.

Abraham as an Illustration of the True Concept of Prayer

While the Quran provides explicit details concerning the attributes of God and Muslims observe and study these attributes and concepts in their daily prayers to

seek better communication with Him, the search for a living God precedes the revelation of the Quran. Particularly, the life of Prophet Abraham is testimony to the connection between prayer and knowledge of the Divine as the One, True God who hears and answers our prayers.

Abraham and Belief in the “Unity” of God

This particular understanding of man’s relationship with the Divine begins with the comprehension of the “unity” of God, and Prophet Abraham is a perfect illustration of this. The Holy Quran records his outright condemnation of polytheism:

And (We sent) Abraham, when he said to his people: Serve God and keep your duty to Him. That is better for you, if you did but know.

You only worship idols besides God and you invent a lie. Surely they whom you serve besides God control no sustenance for you; so seek sustenance from God and serve Him and be grateful to Him. To Him you will be brought back.”(29:16,17)

This unwavering belief in the unity of God raised the status of Prophet Abraham in the eyes of God to that of a “friend”:

And who is better in religion than he who submits himself entirely to God while doing good (to others) and follows the faith of Abraham, the upright one? And God took Abraham for a friend. (4:125)

This is also confirmed in the following verse:

Say: As for me, my Lord has guided me to the right path — a right religion, the faith of Abraham, the upright one, and he was not of the polytheists. (6:161)

In fact, because of his unshakeable belief in the unity of God, the Holy Quran upholds the life of Abraham as an example for the righteous to follow:

Then We revealed to thee: follow the faith of Abraham, the upright one; and he was not of the polytheists (6:123).

Abraham and the Belief in a “Living” God

Along with belief in the “unity” of God, Prophet Abraham believed in a “living” God. The Holy Quran relates Prophet Abraham (PBUH) as praying:

Our Lord, accept from us; surely Thou art *the Hearing, the Knowing*. (2:127)

The Holy Quran also relates an incident in which Prophet Abraham proved the necessity of the True

God being a responsive God. In relation to Prophet Abraham’s argument against idolatry, the Holy Quran narrates:

When he (Abraham) said to his sire and his people: What are these images to whose worship you cleave?

They said: We found our fathers worshipping them.

He said: Certainly you have been, you and your fathers, in manifest error.

And, by God! I will certainly plan against your idols after you go away, turning your backs.

So he broke them into pieces, except the chief of them, that haply they might return to it.

They said: Who has done this to our gods? Surely he is one of the unjust.

They said: We heard a youth, who is called Abraham, speak of them.

They said: Then bring him before the people’s eyes, perhaps they may bear witness.

They said: Hast thou done this to our gods, O Abraham?

He said: Surely (someone) has done it. The chief of them is this; so ask them, if they can speak.

Then they were made to hang down their heads: Thou knowest indeed that they speak not.

He said: Serve you then besides God what does you no good, nor harms you?

Fie on you and on what you serve besides God! Have you no sense?” (21:52-67)

Moreover, in addition to Holy Quran stating, “*I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should hear My call*”, Prophet Abraham’s life is a clear illustration of this responsiveness of God being put into practice. For example, Prophet Abraham prayed:

My Lord, grant me (Abraham) a doer of good deeds. (37:100)

And God Almighty, a truly living God Who hears the prayers of His supplicants, responded:

So We gave him (Abraham) the good news of a forbearing son. (37:101)

Keep in mind, this was at a time when Abraham was a very old and his wife was barren. In other words it was physically impossible for them to have

any children. The power of prayer is clearly manifested by this incident. Nothing can overcome the power of prayer. And Prophet Abraham (PBUH) understood this as he acknowledged that it was God Almighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Merciful and the All-Hearing, that cleared the way of all obstacles and answered his prayer:

Praise be to God, Who has given me (Abraham), in old age, Ishmael and Isaac! Surely my Lord is the Hearer of prayer. (14:39)

Another example is when Prophet Abraham (PBUH) prayed:

My Lord, make this city secure, and save me and my sons from worshipping idols. (14:35)

His prayers were again answered. The city referred to is Makkah, which has today not only become secure but also become a spiritual centre where prayer to the one true God is carried out. Idol worship was and remains blocked out in “this city”, the city of Makkah. Prophet Abraham and his son Prophet Ishmael rebuilt the Ka’bah, the remains of which were still there. “My sons”, in 14:35 of the Holy Quran, certainly includes and refers to all his true followers.

And most significantly, Prophet Abraham (PBUH) prayed for the appearance of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as it is related in the Holy Quran:

Our Lord, and raise up in them (my descendants) a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Thy messages and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them. Surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise. (2:129)

God Almighty raised the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) from the descendants of Prophet Abraham (PBUH) through Ishmael to revive the beliefs that God is One and is a Living God, as taught by Prophet Abraham (PBUH). Apart from reviving Prophet Abraham’s (PBUH) belief, Islam arose from Makkah, the city the foundations of which were laid by Abraham and Ishmael. The Ka’bah is now a religious centre. Muslims the world over face the Ka’bah in their daily prayers, praying to the One God.

Prophet Abraham’s (PBUH) history, his prayers and fulfilment of them and his achievements are clear examples of his complete appreciation and understanding of the true concept of prayer. These fulfilments and achievements together with Prophet Abraham’s (PBUH) prayers also demonstrate without a shadow of doubt that God Almighty is a living God. He hears the prayers and pleas of His suppliants and brings their prayers to fruition.

Prophet Abraham’s (PBUH) belief and true faith in God and his prayers saved him from becoming complacent. Even after his prayers were answered he was not ungrateful as he continued to seek and rely upon and seek protection and assistance from God Almighty, as the Holy Quran relates:

My Lord, make me keep up prayer and from my offspring (too), our Lord, and accept my prayer.

Our Lord, grant me protection and my parents and the believers on the day when the reckoning comes to pass. (14:40,41)

Conclusion:

History shows why Prophet Abraham (PBUH) has been described in the Holy Quran as a “friend of God”, “the upright one”, and the “blessed one”. He believed in the unity of God in the true sense of the word and was most definitely not a polytheist. He explained and demonstrated that God Almighty is a living God and that He hears and answers the prayers of His suppliants when they call on Him.

Fulfilment of his prayers during his own lifetime, his achievements and the fulfilment of his prayers after his demise demonstrate the power of prayer if performed with the sincerity that it deserves. According to the recorded sayings of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), “no prayer is complete without reference to Prophet Abraham (PBUH)”.

I think it most fitting to conclude this presentation by reciting what God Almighty Himself states about Abraham:

And whosoever forsakes the religion of Abraham makes a fool of himself. And certainly We made him (Abraham) pure in this world, and in the Hereafter he is surely among the righteous. (2:130) ■

Ramadan Messages

A gesture of good-will and an opportunity for peace-building

Compiled by the Editor

Just as Muslims are perceived with suspicion by many Westerners, the West is similarly perceived by many Muslims as being inherently anti-Muslim. This prevalent mistrust between the people of the West and Muslims in the East in recent times has led to misunderstanding causing great turmoil. In an attempt to add a little perspective to this phenomenon, and possibly decrease the level of distrust, we reproduce

below various Ramadan messages and Eid-ul-Fitr greetings by prominent and influential leaders of the West. Also presented is the historic U.S. House Resolution which commemorated the commencement of Ramadan last year. These timely messages reveal the often ignored respect and admiration countries of the West have for both the religion of Islam and Muslims who partake in its spiritual observances. We hope these messages of good-will will be reflected upon with due consideration and have the effect of providing an opportunity for peace-building.

U.S. House Resolution

110th CONGRESS, 1st Session - H. RES. 635, September 5, 2007

Recognizing the commencement of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting and spiritual renewal, and commending Muslims in the United States and throughout the world for their faith.

Whereas since the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, threats and incidents of violence have been directed at law-abiding, patriotic Americans of African, Arab, and South Asian descent, particularly members of the Islamic faith;

Whereas, on September 14, 2001, the House of Representatives passed a concurrent resolution condemning bigotry and violence against Arab-Americans, American Muslims, and Americans from South Asia in the wake of the terrorist attacks;

Whereas it is estimated that there are approximately 1,500,000,000 Muslims worldwide;

Whereas Ramadan is the holy month of fasting and spiritual renewal for Muslims worldwide, and is the 9th month of the Muslim calendar year; and

Whereas the observance of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan commences at dusk on September 13, 2007, and continues for one lunar month: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) during this time of conflict, in order to demonstrate solidarity with and support for members of the community of Islam in the United States and throughout the world, the House of Representatives recognizes the Islamic faith as one of the great religions of the world; and

(2) in observance of and out of respect for the commencement of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting and spiritual renewal, the House of Representatives acknowledges the onset of Ramadan and expresses its deepest respect to Muslims in the

United States and throughout the world on this significant occasion.

Senator Hillary Clinton's Eid Greetings

October 18, 2007

I am pleased to join Muslim-Americans today in celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr, marking the end of the sacred month of Ramadan. During these times of conflict, it is critical that we recognize the positive role of spiritual renewal, compassion, and charity that the month of Ramadan symbolizes. In the United States, millions of Muslims represent hard-working, law-abiding, and family-oriented Americans of all ethnicities and national origins.

I am committed to encouraging the principles of diversity and mutual respect that are the bedrock of our nation. We need to help all Americans understand the important contributions that Muslim-Americans make to keep our communities and country strong. I wish Eid Mubarak, or Happy Eid, with prayers for peace and harmony to all.

President Bush's 2008 Ramadan Message

I send greetings to Muslims observing Ramadan in America and around the globe.

The holy month of Ramadan is a special time of prayer, fasting, and service. For Muslims, these days commemorate the revelation of God's word to the prophet Muhammad in the form of the Qur'an.

I thank the men and women of the Muslim community for their contributions to America. Your love of family, and gratitude to God have strengthened the moral fabric of our country. Our Nation is stronger and more hopeful because of the generosity, talents, and compassion of our Muslim citizens.

Laura and I send our best wishes. Ramadan Mubarak.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's Remarks at the Annual State Department Iftaar Dinner

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, September 8, 2008, Benjamin Franklin Room, Washington, D.C.

Good evening, and Ramadan Kareem. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining me tonight to observe Ramadan. I'm really honored to welcome the distinguished members of the diplomatic community who are joining us, members of Congress, representatives of our civil society and our religious and academic communities.

I also want to extend a special welcome to the poets and musicians and writers and other artists who are with us tonight. Your work enriches our lives and deepens our understanding of Islam's rich culture.

In recent years, I have had the privilege of hosting several Iftaar dinners here at the State Department and of attending several more at the White House, and this time several abroad. In fact, several in one day. This is my last time to host you as Secretary of State. And I'm very glad that you did not think that that was an applause line.

These Iftaar celebrations over the past several years have given me an opportunity to speak with my many Muslim men and women friends and colleagues, and to gain a deeper understanding of this holy month. More than one billion people find comfort and hope in Islam, and Ramadan inspires them to renew their faith through sacrifice and prayer, reflection and charity. People of all faiths can appreciate Ramadan's spirit, one of love for family, devotion to community, and gratitude toward God.

That spirit has no better representative than Imam Hendi. Thank you for that beautiful invocation and for your efforts to promote peace and unity among different faiths and different peoples. The message of understanding and tolerance and pluralism describes the better future that we all hope to build.

Across America, Muslim families are coming together each night of Ramadan to celebrate their devotion to Islam. The many faiths and traditions to which Americans belong enrich our nation and reflect what is best about America. To be American is to adopt our country's creed that all men and women are created equal, that as equals we enjoy certain universal and inalienable rights, and that among these are the right to live without oppression, to worship without persecution, and to think and speak and assemble without retribution.

For hundreds of years, people of all faiths and people of no faith at all have come to the United States to live by these principles, and we have welcomed them. We welcome them still. Every individual who embraces the rights and responsibilities of citizenship makes America more American.

Our belief in the universal liberties of every human being is also what leads our country into the world, not to impose our will or our ways on others, certainly not because we believe ourselves to be perfect. We are anything but perfect. But those imperfections lead us to believe that in the pursuit of a more democratic future, we are doing the work that humanity deserves and desires.

Ladies and gentlemen, our celebration tonight honors artists whose lives and work teaches the value of liberty, the good that comes from individuals having the freedom to express the ideas and values and influ-

ences that matter the most. The poetry that is written, the music that is composed, the history that is unearthed, the buildings that are designed – all of this generously shares Islam with the American people. It reminds us of Islam's culture and scientific contributions to our lives, and it challenges us both as individuals and society to be better, to be more humble and to be more charitable, to think less about ourselves and to think more about others. Your work helps us to show that freedom of expression unleashes the power of art and literature and scholarship at the same time that it holds leaders accountable and makes governments more responsive and ultimately makes lives better.

So on behalf of the men and women of the State Department and the men and women of the United States government worldwide, thank you for honoring us with your presence tonight. You are the bearers of a great faith, a religion of peace and love. And your work ensures that an already rich civilization continues to grow richer.

Thank you again. And again, Ramadam Kareem.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown's Ramadan Message

Ramadan Mubarak

I would like to give you, your family, and all Muslim communities, my sincerest best wishes for the holy month of Ramadan.

Ramadan teaches patience and humility, and reminds us of our shared moral universe; our obligation to others.

The message of empathy for the less fortunate is reflected in Ramadan by the daily fast. And Ramadan's message of compassion and social justice spreads beyond Muslim communities; it speaks of shared values that unite us all.

The hadith of the Prophet Muhammad emphasise the duty of care we owe one another. So during this special month, let us also celebrate the diversity that contributes to Britain's strength.

Muslims make a huge contribution to Britain's success - to our prosperity, our society and our culture. And of course, Ramadan is an opportune time to consider the contribution of Islam not just to Britain, but to the world: Islamic art, science, and philosophy have enriched our lives over many centuries.

Finally, Ramadan is also a time to recall the Prophet's message that "the best richness is the richness of the soul." This speaks to me, as it speaks to so many others. I look forward to continuing positive engagement with British Muslim communities across the UK.

Britain's Foreign Secretary David Miliband's Ramadan Message

September 3, 2008

This is the first week of Ramadan and I am delighted to be able to send my very good wishes to the two million Muslims in Britain who will be celebrating this important festival and of course to Muslims around the world as well. Ramadan is a month of contemplation, prayer and spirituality. A chance for Muslims to look at their own lives and judge them against the high standards that they set for themselves.

But Ramadan is also a chance to look outwards as well as inwards. To look at compassion, charity, responsibility. Not just within the Muslim community but across all of our communities. I think this is a big opportunity for those of us who are not Muslim to learn, to understand and to engage with Muslim citizens who live close to us and ensure that we are working together to bridge the divides of race and religion that too often pull people apart. In that sense I am honoured today to be able to say Ramadan Mubarak.”

President of the Republic of Poland Lech Kaczynski's Ramadan Message

September 17, 2008, Iftaar Dinner in Honor of Ambassadors of Muslim States

Excellencies, Heads of Diplomatic Missions, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me extend my warmest welcome to you, Your Excellencies, at the ceremonial Ramadan dinner. I am very happy to be hosting on the occasion of our joint Iftar such a distinguished and numerous group of Ambassadors accredited in Poland and heads of diplomatic missions from Muslim countries.

Our today's meeting confirms the will of the Polish state to maintain and enhance good and mutually beneficial relations with Muslim states. It is also a token of our respect for the followers of Islam which stems from a long-standing tradition of tolerance and coexistence in the Republic of Poland of citizens who had various nationalities, religions, among whom there were also Muslims. For many centuries, Poland used to be a country on whose vast territory people spoke different languages, practised different religions and spread different traditions and cultures almost in every city, town and village. Very probably, most of you, Excellencies, had an opportunity to meet with representatives of the Polish Muslims: the descendants of the Tartars whose community has written a beautiful patriotic chapter in the annals of history of our home country of the last 600 years. In the free and independent Republic of Poland, the followers of Islam can

freely maintain their customs and rites, can form associations and work together for the common weal.

Our relations with the world of Islam have always featured mutual interest and respect. We, the Poles, have a particularly vivid recollection of the friendly attitude shown by the Osman's Turkey towards the end of the 18th century as a country which never recognized the partitions of Poland. Neither shall we ever forget the hospitality and support accorded by Muslim communities in the Middle East and beyond to thousands of Polish soldiers and civilians in the World War 2, when our country found itself under occupation and homeless wanderers where evacuated from the Soviet Union. The ashes of many of them found their resting place on cemeteries scattered all around the region...

The period of Ramadan is a good time to reflect on the condition of the contemporary Muslim world and the relationship between civilisations. In this gathering, it is needless to say what a vast role mutual tolerance and dialogue play between the cultures and regions, and especially between Christianity and Islam, and also Judaism, in the contemporary globalised world. We, the Poles, are fervent advocates of such a dialogue bearing in mind the guidelines left by our great compatriot Pope John Paul II. His words contained in the Message for the World Day of Peace of January 1, 2001, remain valid providing the definition of a dialogue as a mutual acceptance and genuine collaboration demanded by the human family's basic vocation to unity.

On the occasion of Ramadan and the approaching Eid al-Fitr, I extend to all of you, Ladies and Gentlemen, my wishes for your personal well-being and success in the performance of your diplomatic mission in Poland. I am confident that our joint efforts will contribute to enhanced cooperation between the Republic of Poland and Muslim countries and will help to bring our nations closer to each other.”

Former Prime Minister Tony Blair's Ramadan Message

Ramadan Mubarak,

Ramadan is a powerful act of worship by the Muslim community whose spirituality of fasting and self-restraint sends such a powerful message to the world. It is also a time of solidarity, sharing and zakkat-giving that highlights the needs of the poor and needy. For this reason it is a fortunate accident that the General Assembly of the United Nations has chosen 25 September as the date for a Summit meeting to consider the progress of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These were agreed by the nations of the world in 2000 as the necessary practical steps to

reduce world poverty. The faith communities have much to contribute towards realizing these goals and already, often selflessly and unpublished, are doing so. I am thinking today particularly of the outstanding work of the Muslim aid, relief and development agencies and networks. This UN mid-term review offers all the faith communities a great moral challenge: to redouble together current efforts to achieve the MDGs.

A peaceful, prosperous and blessed Ramadan and a joyous Eid,

2008 Republican Presidential Nominee John McCain's Eid Greetings

On the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, the Festival of Breaking the Fast, I extend my warm greetings to American Muslims and Muslims around the world.

Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan which is the holiest month of the Muslim year and a time of prayer, reflection, and fasting. To celebrate this holiday, many Muslims gather in their homes and mosques to thank God for His blessings and His help in keeping the fast. Muslims also demonstrate their compassion by reaching out to the less fortunate and giving gifts of money or food to help those in need. This year, many American Muslims have reached out to the victims of Hurricanes Gustav, Hanna, and Ike. Their contributions have been generous and reflect the important values shared by all Americans.

Our Nation is blessed to count many Muslims among our fellow citizens. As Americans, we share a commitment to family, a belief in God's justice and man's moral responsibility, and hope for a future of peace and tolerance.

Cindy and I send our best wishes for a joyful celebration.

Eid Mubarak (season's greeting)!

Democratic Presidential Nominee Barack Obama's Ramadan Message

I want to convey my greetings to the American Muslim community on the Festival of Breaking the Fast that marks the end of Ramadan. Through fasting, prayer and charity, your observance this past month of the universal values of patience, generosity and caring for the less fortunate is an important reminder of the values that have helped make America great. As a nation, we must commit ourselves to that greater cause to ensure that the less fortunate are never forgotten or ignored. On behalf of Michelle, Joe and Jill Biden and I, we hope that Ramadan brought you happiness, good health, and a sense of renewal. ■

Abrogation versus Interpretation

Assessing Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's view on the Islamic concept of "Jihad"

Maulana Muhammad Ali

[There is a serious misconception regarding the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement's view on the topic of Jihad in Islam. It is claimed by some that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad advocated that the Islamic doctrine of Jihad is now abrogated. This perception was so prevalent that the government of Pakistan cited it as one of the two reasons for which members of the Ahmadiyya Movement were to be regarded as "non-Muslim". Just as the first reason that formed the basis for Pakistan's Anti-Ahmadiyya Declaration was wrong – that is, despite the common misperception, Hazrat Mirza never claimed he was a "prophet" as the term is commonly used in Islamic terminology – so too was the second reason – the misperception that Hazrat Mirza viewed the Islamic concept of Jihad as abrogated – completely unfounded. Reproduced below is a section from Maulana Muhammad Ali's book "Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement". As is clearly shown, it was the incorrect view that Jihad was synonymous with "holy war" that Hazrat Mirza denounced, not the true concept of Jihad as taught in the Quran and illustrated by the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Hazrat Mirza, one hundred years prior to 9/11 mind you, stressed the importance of eradicating the false "violent" concept of Jihad held by the masses and warned of the dire consequences should this not be done. Today, we see most Islamic scholars agreeing with the exact position taken by Hazrat Mirza; an earlier adoption of such public declarations and concerted reformatory efforts, though, as called for by Hazrat Mirza a century ago, could have saved the world from much unnecessary bloodshed and prevented the prevalent misperceptions in the West of Islam being a violent, hostile faith.]

Doctrine of Jihad not abrogated

Another charge against the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement is that he denied the doctrine of *jihad*. It is easy to see that anyone who accepts the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad cannot deny *jihad*, injunctions relating to which occupy a considerable portion of the Holy Quran. The orthodox Muslims believe that some verses of the Holy Quran have been abrogated by others. The Ahmadiyya movement has long been fighting against this doctrine, and many enlightened Muslims now accept the Ahmadi view that no verse, not even one word or one jot of the Holy

Quran was abrogated. Under the heading, “A statement of some of our beliefs”, the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement wrote:

“God speaks to His servants in this *umma*, and they are given the semblance of prophets, and they are not really prophets, for the Quran has made perfect the needs of Law, and they are given only an understanding of the Quran, and they cannot add to, or detract from it aught; and whoever adds to, or detracts from it, he is of the devils who are wicked.” (*Mawahib al-Rahman*, pp. 66-67)

It is therefore impossible that, holding such a belief, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad could say that he abrogated *jihad*, which was made obligatory by the Holy Quran and which was one of the five fundamentals of Islam. I quote a passage from his pamphlet entitled *The Jihad* to show that he differed from the ‘*ulama* only in his interpretation of *jihad* as inculcated by the Holy Quran:

“It should be remembered that the doctrine of *jihad* as understood by the Muslim ‘*ulama* of our day, who call themselves Maulvis, is not true . . . These people are so persistent in their belief, which is entirely wrong and against the Quran and Hadith, that the man who does not believe in it and is against it is called a *Dajjal*.” (*The Jihad*, pp. 5-6)

Misconceptions about Jihad

It would appear from this that, according to the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, the doctrine of *jihad* as understood by the ‘*ulama* was opposed to the true teachings of the Holy Quran and Hadith. What Ahmad rejected was not the doctrine of *jihad* but the orthodox interpretation thereof, which had given rise in the West to grave misconceptions regarding the doctrine of *jihad*, so that even unprejudiced Western writers thought the word *jihad* to be synonymous with war undertaken for forcing the religion of Islam upon non-Muslims. Thus, in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, the article on “Jihad” opens with the following words: “The spread of Islam by arms is a religious duty upon Muslims in general”. Klein, in his *Religion of Islam*, makes an even more sweeping statement: “Jihad . . . The fighting against unbelievers with the object of either winning them over to Islam, or subduing and exterminating them in case they refuse to become Muslims.”

In the Muslim popular mind there was an even greater misconception, that the killing of an unbeliever was *jihad* and that such an act entitled the perpetrator to be called a *ghazi*. This conception, coupled with

the prevailing belief in the advent of a Mahdi who would put all non-Muslims to the sword if they refused to accept Islam, opposed as it was to the plain teachings of the Holy Quran, was doing immense harm to the cause of the spread of Islam among non-Muslims. With very few exceptions, even educated Muslims were victims of the wrong impression that Islam enjoined aggressive war against non-believers, and the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement had to carry on incessant war, not against *jihad* as inculcated by the Holy Quran, but against the false conceptions of it prevalent among both Muslims and non-Muslims.

War to spread religion never allowed

The way was cleared for removing these misconceptions by establishing two principles: (1) That *jihad* means *exerting oneself to the extent of one’s ability and power, whether it is by word or deed*, and that the word is used in this broad sense in the Holy Quran; (2) that when it is used in the narrower sense of *fighting*, it means fighting only in self-defence. If, therefore, all exertions to carry the message of Islam to non-Muslims by simple preaching, or what may be called spiritual warfare, fell within the purview of *jihad*, a war carried on for the propagation of Islam, if such a one was ever undertaken by a Muslim ruler, was quite outside the scope of its true significance, as it was against the basic principle laid down in the Holy Quran that “there is no compulsion in religion” (2:256). If Ahmad ever spoke of the abrogation of *jihad*, it was of this misconception of the word *jihad*, not of the *jihad* as inculcated by the Holy Quran, every word of which he believed to be a Divine revelation which could not be abrogated till the day of judgment. Here is another passage from the pamphlet quoted above:

“Their contention that, since *jihad* was permitted in the early days [of Islam], there is no reason why it should be prohibited now is entirely misconceived. It may be refuted in two ways; firstly, that this inference is drawn from wrong premises and our Holy Prophet never used the sword against any people, except those who first took up the sword [against the Muslims] . . . secondly, that, even if we suppose for the sake of argument that there was such a *jihad* in Islam as these Maulvis think, even so that order does not stand now, for it is written that, when the Promised Messiah appears, there will be an end of *jihad* with the sword and of religious wars.” (*The Jihad*, p. 6)

It will be seen that the prevalent idea that Islam allowed a *jihad* for the spread of religion is refuted in two ways. In the first place, it is stated that this conception of *jihad* is against the Holy Quran and

Hadith, as the Holy Prophet raised the sword only in self-defence, not for the propagation of religion. Further, it is added that, even if for the sake of argument it is supposed that a *jihad* for the propagation of religion was ever undertaken - that such was never undertaken by the Holy Prophet has been definitely stated in the first part - such *jihad* cannot be undertaken now, for it is said of the Promised Messiah that he will put down (religious) wars *yaz' al-harb*, as plainly stated in the *Bukhari*. What is aimed at is really this, that a *jihad* contrary to the teachings of the Holy Quran and to the practice of the Holy Prophet, if ever there was one, was undoubtedly the result of some misconception, and, according to the hadith quoted above, the Promised Messiah will remove that misconception and thus put an end to such wars.

Conditions of Jihad

This position is made still more clear in an Arabic letter, addressed to the Muslims of the world, and forming a supplement to his book, *Tuhfa Golarwiyya*. In this letter he says:

“There is not the least doubt that the conditions laid down for *jihad* [in the Holy Quran] are not to be met with at the present time and in this country; so it is illegal for the Muslims to fight for [the propagation of] religion and to kill anyone who rejects the Sacred Law, for God has made clear the illegality of *jihad* when there is peace and security.” (*Tuhfa Golarwiyya*, Supplement, p. 30)

It is here made clear that *jihad* with the sword is allowed by Islam only under certain conditions, and, as those conditions are not met with at the present time in the country in which the writer lives, therefore *jihad* with the sword is illegal here at the present time. This argument leads to the definite conclusion that *jihad* may be legal in another country in which exist the necessary conditions laid down in the Holy Quran, or even here when the conditions have changed. These conditions are expressly stated in the Holy Book: “And fight in the way of God against those who fight against you, and be not aggressive, for God does not love the aggressors” (2:191). ■

**CALL
FOR PAPERS!**

The Light AND ISLAMIC REVIEW

welcomes submissions of articles for publication. Preferably, articles should be between 5-10 pages long, single-spaced, in *Microsoft Word* format and submitted via e-mail. Authors from all faiths and denominations are welcome, the subject matter of the paper, though, must be substantively related to Islam. Please contact the Editorial Board for more information on Editorial Guidelines.

**PASTOR ROD
PARSLEY
INVITED TO
DEBATE!**

As widely reported by various media outlets recently, Pastor Rod Parsley has an extremely unfavorable view of Islam. He believes:

- Islam is an “Anti-Christ” religion;
- The underlying spirit of Islam is “one of hostility”;
- Muhammad “received revelations from demons”;
- America was “founded, in part, with the intention of seeing this false religion [Islam] destroyed”;
- 9/11 “was a generational call to arms” against Islam.

In a sincere effort to educate Pastor Parsley, his congregation, and others holding similar opinions, about the true nature of Islam, the **Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society** invites Pastor Parsley to debate the merits of his views.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.prweb.com/releases/2008/06/prweb988134.htm>

**WILL PASTOR PARSLEY
DEFEND HIS VIEWS?**

Some of our publications

World-renowned literature published by

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, (Lahore) U.S.A. Inc.

"Probably no man living has done longer or more valuable service for the cause of Islamic revival than Maulana Muhammad Ali of Lahore. His literary works, with those of the late Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, have given fame and distinction to the Ahmadiyya Movement." — Marmaduke Pickthall, translator of the Quran into English.

The Holy Quran pp. 1418. \$19.95 HB. \$15.95 PB.

Redesigned, retypeset new edition published in year 2002.

Arabic text, with English translation, exhaustive commentary, comprehensive Introduction and large Index. Has since 1917 influenced millions of people all over the world. Model for all later translations. Thoroughly revised in 1951.

Also available in Spanish, French, Russian, German, Italian and Dutch.

The Religion of Islam pp. 617. \$20.95 HB. \$15.95 PB.

Comprehensive and monumental work on the sources, principles and practices of Islam.

"Such a book is greatly needed when in many Muslim countries we see persons eager for the revival of Islam, making mistakes through lack of just this knowledge." — Marmaduke Pickthall.

Also available in German, Dutch and Indonesian.

A Manual of Hadith pp. 400. \$10.95 HB.

Sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad on practical life of a Muslim, classified by subject. Arabic text, English translation and notes.

Muhammad, The Prophet pp. 200. \$7.95

Researched biography of Holy Prophet. Corrects many misconceptions about his life, and answers Western criticism.

Early Caliphate pp. 214. \$4.95

History of Islam under first four Caliphs.

"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." — Islamic Culture, April 1935.

The Muslim Prayer Book pp. 90. \$4.95

Details of Muslim prayer, with Arabic text, transliteration and translation into English. Illustrated with photographs.

Living Thoughts of the Prophet Muhammad

Brief biography of the Holy Prophet, and his teachings.

"... so beautifully done by Muhammad Ali ... should form part of the education of every person who aspires to know the life and career of a great historical personality" —

Times of Ceylon. pp. 156. \$5.95

The New World Order pp. 86. \$4.95

"... makes a thorough analysis of the complicated problems of the world ... examines the various solutions offered by Islam to the numerous problems of the modern world" — The Dawn, Karachi.

History and Doctrines of the Babi Movement pp. 115

By M. Muhammad Ali. Deals with the Bahai religion. \$4.95

The Teachings of Islam pp. 226. \$4.95

by *Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad*. Highly-acclaimed discussion of the Islamic path for the physical, moral and spiritual progress of man.

"The ideas are very profound and very true." — Count Tolstoy, Russia.

Muhammad in World Scriptures, v. 1 pp. 412. \$15.95

By Maulana Abdul Haq Vidyarthi, scholar of scriptural languages. Prophecies about Prophet Muhammad in the Bible, with quotations in original Hebrew and Greek. HB.

Jesus in Heaven on Earth pp. 471. \$16.95 HB. \$12.95 PB.

By Khwaja Nazir Ahmad. Post-crucifixion journey of Jesus to Kashmir and identification of his tomb there.

Islam to East and West pp. 142. \$4.95

By Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. His famous lectures delivered in various countries of the East and West during 1913 to 1926.

Table Talk pp. 65. \$2.95

By Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. Religion for the rational thinker.

The Ideal Prophet pp. 212. \$7.95

By Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. His character and achievements.

Fundamentals of the Christian Faith in the light of the Gospels, by Maulana Sadr-ud-Din pp. 62. \$2.95

Anecdotes from the life of Prophet Muhammad pp. 49

By M. A. Faruqui. Life of Prophet in simple language. \$2.50

Introduction to Islam pp. 66. \$4.95

by *Dr Zahid Aziz*. For younger readers and beginners. Basic Islam explained in question/answer format.

The Meaning of Surah Fatihah pp. 16. \$4.95

By Fazeel Sahukhan. Illustrated, color, children's book.

Al-Hamdu-li-llah pp. 18. \$7.95

By Fazeel Sahukhan. Illustrated, color, children's book for under-fives to teach them ten basic Islamic phrases.

THE GREAT REFORMER

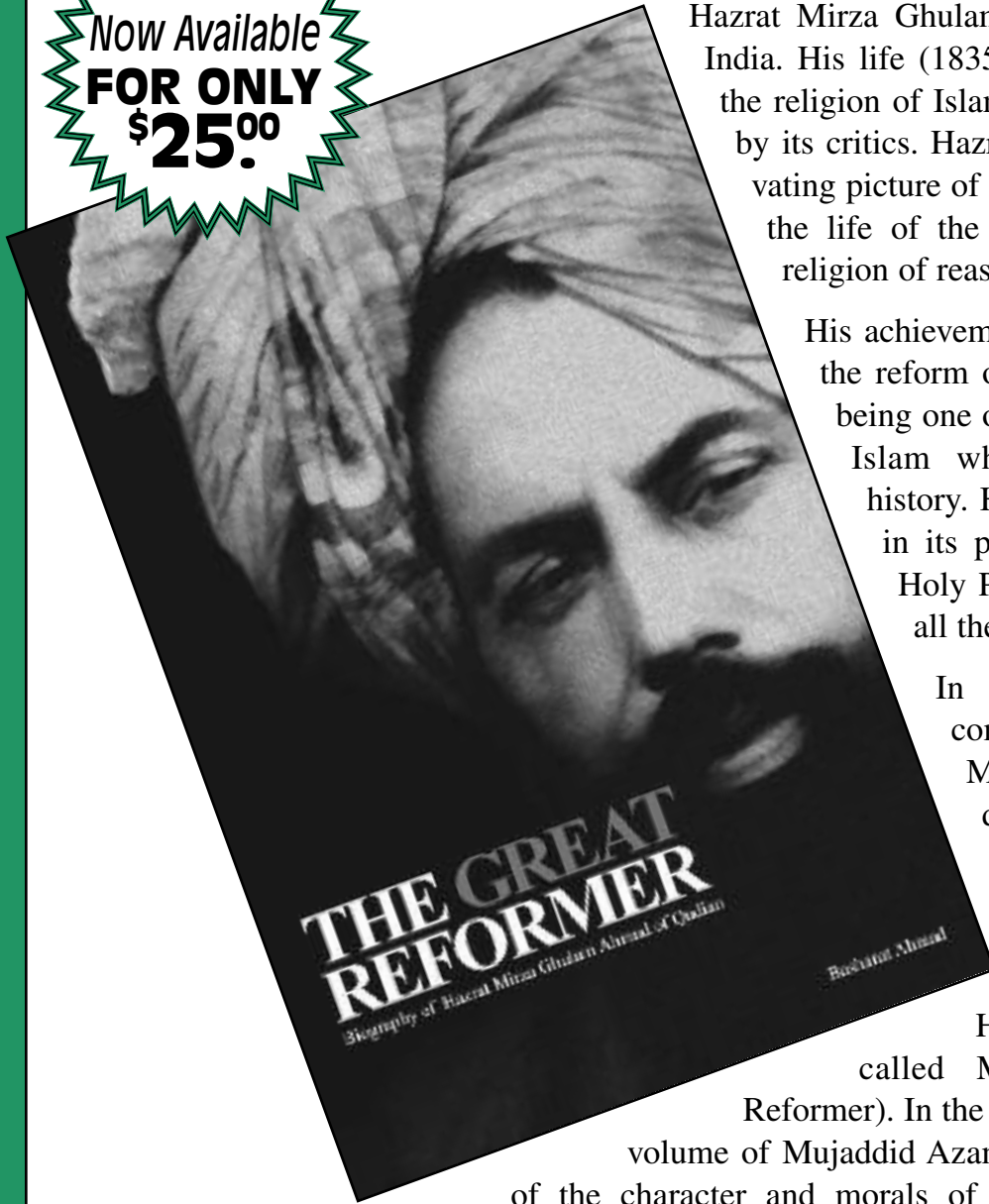
Biography of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian

Dr. Basharat Ahmad

VOL. 1

Now Available

**FOR ONLY
\$25.00**



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was born in Qadian, India. His life (1835-1908) spanned a period when the religion of Islam was under the heaviest attack by its critics. Hazrat Mirza put forward the captivating picture of Islam as found in the Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad – a religion of reason, peace and tolerance.

His achievements in the revival of Islam and the reform of Muslims proved his claim of being one of the Mujaddids (Reformers) of Islam who arose throughout Muslim history. His mission was to preach Islam in its pristine purity, as taught by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the Last of all the Prophets.

In 1936, Dr. Basharat Ahmad, a companion and disciple of Hazrat Mirza, undertook the writing of a detailed biography of his spiritual mentor. He completed the first phase of this mammoth undertaking in 1939 by publishing a chronological biography of

Hazrat Mirza in two volumes called Mujaddid Azam (The Great

Reformer). In the second phase, he wrote the third volume of Mujaddid Azam, which contains an exposition

of the character and morals of Hazrat Mirza, and provides a commentary on his services to the Islamic faith. He finished the writing of

Volume III just before his death in 1943 and this volume was published posthumously.

Hardcover • ISBN # 0-913321-98-2 • 996 pps • 20 color images • \$25.00 USD

Published by Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam, (Lahore) USA Inc.

Phone (614) 873-1030 Fax (614) 873-1022

P.O. Box 3370 Dublin, OH 43016 • aail@aol.com