

“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

January - June 2020

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. 97

CONTENTS

No. 1

Introduction to the Conference:

“Ahmadiyya, in Scholarly Perspective”3

By The Editor

***An Assessment of the Claim of Prophethood
Attributed to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Founder
of the Ahmadiyya Movement***4

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

***Continuity and Change: Historical Roots and
Contemporary Expression of the Ideals of the
Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement of the United States***18

By Prof. Michael Birkel, Earlham School of Religion, Richmond, Indiana, USA

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.

ISSN: 1060-4596

Editor: Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

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: aaiil@aol.com

Website: www.muslim.org

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About ourselves

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

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

Achievements:

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

History:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Introduction to the Conference: “Ahmadiyya, in Scholarly Perspective”

By The Editor

On October 24-25, 2019, the Faculty of Comparative Study of Religion and Humanism in Antwerp, Belgium held an academic conference titled “**Ahmadiyya, in Scholarly Perspective**”. Several religious studies professors from various countries, international human rights advocates and officials of the Ahmadiyya Movement (both the Lahore and Qadian sections) presented papers at the conference (or submitted papers to be delivered on their behalf). After each paper was presented, questions were fielded from the participants and further discussion ensued.

I was among the presenters at the conference and was very grateful to be invited and be given the opportunity to contribute from the Lahore Ahmadiyya perspective. Knowing the primary issue that makes the name “Ahmadiyya” controversial concerns the belief that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed to be a prophet, I focused my paper on examining the validity of the claim of prophethood attributed to him. The objective was to not only assess this allegation from the viewpoint of opponents of the Ahmadiyya Movement, but to also contextualize Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s writings in light of the beliefs advanced by the Qadian section of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat was also very fortunate to have Professor Michael Birkel (Professor of Religion at Earlham College, Indiana) be requested to submit a paper at the Conference. He chose to research and write about the practical work being performed by the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat to continue Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s mission to spread the true teachings of Islam to the world. Prof. Birkel’s paper is an objective account from an outsider, which provides a valuable endorsement of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat in the field of academia. In addition, a paper was submitted by a professor from the University of Botswana, Muhammed Haron, that relayed information about the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat’s contributions to Islam in South Africa and its victory in the historic South Africa Case.

As a result, although the minority at the Conference, these papers placed the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat at the forefront of discussion. Both, in terms of theology as well as practical missionary work, participants were eager to learn more about the often-neglected Lahore section of the Ahmadiyya Movement. This interest continued after the conference as well. The papers present-

ed at the Conference are published in a special issue of the religious studies journal *Acta Comparanda Subsidia*. It was deemed appropriate to include a separate introduction to the publication titled “Two Branches in Ahmadiyya” to highlight the fact that there are two “Ahmadiyya” groups that have fundamentally different interpretations. It is hoped that the articles in this popular religious studies journal will help plant a seed of appreciation for Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s writings in their proper context, will be a source of guidance for researchers on the Ahmadiyya Movement, and this perspective will continue to grow in the academic field.

The following are some reviews of the journal *Acta Comparanda Subsidia*:

“For many years already I follow the articles published in this journal with great interest. I think *Acta Comparanda* presents a wide range of subjects that are of utmost importance for both scholars and students in the fields of religion, philosophy and theology. Publications in the journal can be characterized as highly qualified and they reflect profound academic research and scholarship.

What makes *Acta Comparanda* so special is that attention reaches out to a large variety of disciplines on the field of religious studies, philosophy and theology. Moreover in the journal we come across themes and subjects from the various world religions analysed both from historical and from contemporary approaches and perspectives. I regularly advise my students to consult *Acta Comparanda* for their works.”

Em. Prof. Eileen Barker (London School of Economics and Political Science)

“This journal is unique in its accomplishments of publishing important papers by scholars alongside scholarly papers by practitioners of selected religions for a particular volume. I truly believe that this is a journal of outstanding importance.”

Prof. Donald A. Westbroek (Center for the Study of Religion, University of California, Los Angeles)

In this Special Issue of *The Light and Islamic Review*, we are pleased to reproduce my paper as well as the paper prepared by Prof. Michael Birkel. On the back cover of this issue, we reproduce the front cover of *Acta Comparanda Subsidia VII*, which includes a list of the papers published in the journal. Copies of *Acta Comparanda Subsidia VII* are available for purchase from the Antwerp FVG at the following link: <http://www.antwerpfvg.org/publicaties-fvg-antwerpen/subsidia.html>. ■

An Assessment of the Claim of Prophethood Attributed to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement

Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

Introduction

If you wish to converse with me, define your terms.¹

Defining the terms used in important communications is recognized as necessary for mutual understanding. Will Durant, in his book *The Story of Philosophy: The Lives and Opinions of the Greater Philosophers*² underscores this notion; he writes: “This is the alpha and omega of logic, the heart and soul of it, that every important term in serious discourse shall be subjected to the strictest scrutiny and definition.” This lesson on the importance and practicality of defining terms is relevant, and it is argued in this paper essential, to assessing the claim of prophethood attributed to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam.

The Ahmadiyya have been declared heretical by various Muslim authorities, which has led to their persecution around the world, most notably in Pakistan.³ These declarations of heresy are premised on the view that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed to be a prophet, and that such a claim is in contravention of the entrenched Islamic belief in Prophet Muhammad being the last of the prophets. Despite the phrase “who claimed to be a prophet” commonly found after the name Mirza Ghulam Ahmad – in religious, academic and lay literature alike – the specific manner in which the Founder of the Movement used the term “prophet” is rarely acknowledged. It is simply accepted that he employed the term in reference to himself in a theological sense.⁴ The issue of how Mirza Ghulam Ahmad intended the term “prophet” to be understood in his writings, though, is far more complex.

The following illustration is instructive. The traditional Islamic position is that Prophet Muhammad is the last prophet after whom no prophet may appear. This position is based on the Quran referring to Prophet Muhammad as *khatam an nabiyyin* (meaning, “seal of the prophets”)⁵ and hadith reports in which Prophet Muhammad states “There is no prophet after me.”⁶ This belief in the finality of prophethood in Prophet Muhammad is commonly expressed in writings by Muslims in the following ways:

“God by naming the Holy Prophet as *khatam an nabiyyin* in the Quran, and the Holy Prophet himself by saying ‘*There is no prophet after me*’ in Hadith, had settled the matter that no prophet can come after the Holy Prophet, in terms of the real meaning of prophethood.”

“The Holy Quran, in the verses, ‘*This day I have perfected for you your religion*’, and ‘*He is the Messenger of Allah and the khatam an nabiyyin*’, has ended prophethood with the Holy Prophet Muhammad.”

“The Holy Prophet had repeatedly said that no prophet would come after him, and the hadith ‘*There is no prophet after me*’ was so well-known that no one had any doubt about its authenticity. And the Holy Quran, every word of which is binding, in its verse ‘he is the Messenger of Allah and the *khatam an nabiyyin*’ confirmed that prophethood has in fact ended with our Holy Prophet.”

It is plain these statements advance the belief of Islamic orthodoxy on the subject of finality of prophethood. In fact, one would not be surprised to find such affirmations in Prophet Muhammad being the last prophet in declarations of heresy against the Ahmadiyya. But these statements are not from anti-Ahmadiyya literature or mainstream (non-Ahmadiyya) sources. These statements are from the writings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.⁷

Clearly, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad believed in the finality of prophethood in Prophet Muhammad and interpreted the term “*khatam an nabiyyin*” as meaning Prophet Muhammad is the *last* of the prophets. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad went so far as to declare:

“After the Holy Prophet Muhammad, I consider anyone who claims prophethood and messenger-ship to be a liar and unbeliever.”⁸

“Let it be clear to him that we also curse the person who claims prophethood.”⁹

“... I consider the person who denies the finality of prophethood as being without faith and outside the pale of Islam.”¹⁰

Where then lies the controversy? The opposition to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is premised on the fact that his writings also include the word “prophet” (*nabi*), and the corresponding word “messenger” (*rasul*), in reference to himself. He unequivocally pronounced: “I have never denied being called a prophet *in this sense*.”¹¹ The obvious question arises, in what *sense* did Mirza Ghulam Ahmad refer to himself as a prophet. And, does this *sense* undermine the principle of finality of prophethood?

hood, as is alleged in the declarations of heresy issued against him?

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's writings contain very nuanced language. Many of the terms he uses are not employed in common Islamic vernacular. However, academic researchers suggest that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's descriptions of prophethood are not as far removed from mainstream Muslim belief as is commonly thought, especially when compared with its metaphorical depictions by Sufi Muslim theologians.¹² But what is lacking from academic literature is the detailed definitions and explanations by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad himself as to how the term "prophet" is to be understood in his writings. Many of the saintly Muslim figures of the past faced opposition for employing language considered to be heretical, and only many years after their death had their writings re-assessed and interpreted in a reformed light.¹³ In contrast, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad responded to his contemporary opponents during his lifetime, scrupulously defining the terms they found objectionable and clarifying the context in which those terms should be construed.¹⁴

A review of the corpus of writings by the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement reveals he uses the term "prophet" in three distinct ways: 1) in a literal sense, to convey the lexiconic meaning of the word, 2) in a metaphorical style, as employed in Sufi literature, and 3) in a theological manner, in accordance with Islamic religious doctrine. He further explains in his writings that he attributes the word "prophet" to himself only as far as the first two connotations permit and rejects the notion that he ascribes the third meaning of the word to himself. As a result, the allegation that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed to be a prophet in accordance with the terminology of Islamic theology is contrary to the very explanations he sets forth in his writings. It is hoped that this paper will provide a better appreciation for the nuanced language used by the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement and, thereby, offer a basis to critically examine the validity of the declarations of heresy issued against him.

This paper commences with an overview of the concept of prophethood according to Islamic theology and an assessment of the connection between the institution of prophethood and the phenomenon of revelation. It then presents a review of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's writings as they pertain to the subjects of prophethood and revelation and compares them with the traditional view. The paper then examines Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's claim of being a recipient of revelation and addresses the connection between this claim and the word "prophet" found in his writings.¹⁵

Prophethood versus Prophecy (Revelation)

In order to evaluate Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's views on prophethood, an understanding of the concept of prophethood according to the Islamic tradition is first needed.¹⁶ The Arabic word for "prophet" is *nabi* and is literally defined as "an announcement of great utility" or "imparting knowledge of a thing."¹⁷ The word is further understood as describing a person "who gives information about God."¹⁸ The word *nabi* is associated with the word *rasul*, which means messenger", or literally "one sent."¹⁹ The two words, *nabi* and *rasul*, are used interchangeably in the Quran.²⁰

Divine revelation is central to the function of a prophet in the Islamic tradition.²¹ Commonly, it is presumed that prophethood and revelation are tantamount to the same thing, in that only prophets receive revelation from God. However, there are forms of revelation also experienced by spiritual personalities who are not regarded as prophets. Concerning revelation to man, the Quran classifies three types:

"It is not vouchsafed to a mortal that God should speak to him except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases."²²

The first type of revelation is the simplest form and signifies an "inspiration of an idea into the heart," distinguished from hearing actual words. This class of revelation is referred to as *wahy khafi* or "inner revelation." The second type – "from behind a veil" – is a higher form of revelation and includes dreams (*ru'ya*), visions (*kashf*) and hearing actual words of inspiration (*ilham*). And the third type – via a "messenger" – is the highest and most developed form of revelation. This is the type of revelation prophets receive through the messenger-ship of Angel Gabriel. This class of revelation is referred to as *wahy matluww* or "revelation that is recited in words" and is what forms the basis of the revealed scriptures of the prophets.²³ It is only this third type of revelation that is restricted to prophets.

The Quran demonstrates the different types of revelation to man by presenting accounts in which spiritual personalities who are not considered prophets also receiving revelation.²⁴ Mary, the mother of Jesus, is stated as receiving revelation on multiple occasions.²⁵ The mother of Moses is also stated as receiving revelation.²⁶ The disciples of Jesus too are stated as being recipients of revelation from God.²⁷

The Quran specifically addresses the issue of continuity of non-prophetic revelation by stating that the *auliya* are given *bushra*:

"Now surely the friends of God (*auliya*) – there is no fear upon them nor do they grieve. Those who

believe and guard against evil, for them are good news (*bushra*) in this world and the hereafter.”²⁸

The *auliya* (plural for *wali*) is a term that refers to saintly figures among the Muslims who have developed a strong connection to God.²⁹ And the term *bushra* was explained by Prophet Muhammad in the following way:

“He said: Nothing remains of prophethood except *mubashshirat* [same root word as *bushra*]. The people asked: What is *mubashshirat*? He said: True dreams.”³⁰

Similarly, Prophet Muhammad explained:

“The good dream (*mubashshirat*) of a righteous believer is one of the forty-six parts of prophethood.”³¹

Revelation in the form of good or true dreams received by saints, therefore, is considered a *part* of prophethood. And, because it is only one of the many aspects of prophethood, its continuity does not undermine the complete or actual prophethood that ended with Prophet Muhammad.³²

Reports in Sahih al Bukhari further clarify this point. Prophet Muhammad explained that revelation in the form of words of inspiration from God to saintly persons is also a *part* of prophethood that continues:

“Among the nations before you, there used to be *muhaddathun*, and if there is one of them in my nation, it is Umar.”³³

He further clarified who the *muhaddathun* are by defining the term in an almost identical report from the same source by replacing “*muhaddathun*” with a description:

“Among the Israelite people before you, there used to be *men who were spoken to by God although they were not prophets*. If there is such a one among my followers, it is Umar.”³⁴

A *muhaddath*, therefore, is a person who is spoken to by God but is not a prophet. Consequently, the term *wali* in the Quran and the term *muhaddath* in Hadith signify the same thing: a saintly person who receives “non-prophetic” revelation.³⁵

This principle of continuity of non-prophetic revelation to saintly personalities is explained in renowned traditional commentaries of the Quran and Hadith and is a prominent theme in the writings of classical Muslim theologians. For instance, Al Ghazali explained in his popular work *Ihya al-Ulum*:

“Know that the men of the heart are shown the secrets of the worlds through inspiration [into the mind], or through true dreams, or through visions

while awake. This is one of the highest grades of the degrees of prophethood, as a true dream is one of the forty-six parts of prophethood. So beware of denying this knowledge through lack of understanding.”³⁶

Abdul Qadir Jilani similarly argued in *Al-Fath ar-Rabbani*:

“Woe unto you, O innovator! Does God not have the power to say: ‘I am God.’ Our God, great is His glory, is a speaker, and not dumb. His word is heard and understood.”³⁷

Ibn Arabi further elaborated in *Futuh al-Makkiyya*:

“It is impossible that revelation from God can stop. For if it were to be cut off, there would not remain for the world any spiritual food by which it continues to subsist.”³⁸

Similar sentiments are found in the writings of Jalalud-Din Rumi, Shaykh Ahmad of Sirhind, Imam Shi’rani, Shah Wali-ullah of Delhi, Imam Ja’far Sadiq and many others.³⁹

The points outlined above evidence three important principles: 1) the Quran identifies spiritual personalities that received revelation but were not prophets; 2) these spiritual personalities received the first two classes of revelation (i.e. non-prophetic revelation); 3) these two classes of revelation continue among saintly personalities and does not end. As a result, only that one form of revelation that is granted to prophets – that which is communicated through Angel Gabriel and which forms the basis of a revealed scripture – is what has discontinued with the finality of prophethood in Prophet Muhammad. If prophethood has ended, *prophetic* revelation is no longer possible. But the other two forms of revelation, the types that are available to saintly personalities who are not prophets, remains.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s Classification of Revelation

Having established this background, attention may be directed to the views of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Consistent with his belief in the finality of prophethood in Prophet Muhammad, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad maintains that prophetic revelation (*wahy nabuwwaat* or *wahy rasilat*), that form of revelation that is transmitted via the agency of Angel Gabriel, has ended:

“It is obvious that if it is supposed that the angel Gabriel can now descend with even one sentence of prophetic revelation (*wahy nubuwwat*) and remain silent thereafter, this would still contradict the finality of prophethood, for when the seal of finality is breached and revelation granted to mes-

sengers (*wahy risalat*) again starts to descend, it matters not whether the amount is little or much.

Every wise person can understand that if God is true to His promise, and the promise given in the *khatam an nabiyyin* verse – which has been explicitly mentioned in the Hadith, that now, after the death of the Prophet of God, peace and the blessings of God be upon him, Gabriel has been forbidden forever from bringing prophetic revelation (*wahy nubuwwat*) – if all these things are true and correct, then no person at all can appear as a messenger (*rasul*) after our Prophet, peace be upon him.⁴⁰

Moreover, in harmony with views of classical Muslim theologians, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad also explains that a type of revelation, that *part* of prophethood granted to saints, however, remains:

“The Messenger of Allah is reported to have said that ‘there is nothing left of prophethood except good news (*mubashshirat*).’ That is to say, from the parts of prophethood only one part remains, namely *mubashshirat*, which comprises true dreams, genuine and true visions, and revelation which descends on the chosen ones from among the saints (*auliya*) ...”⁴¹

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad further clarifies the distinctive nature of prophetic revelation in the following way:

“... the Hadith proves that perfect prophethood (*haqiqi nabuwwat*), which contained the revelation of the law (*shariah*), has certainly been cut off. But prophethood which contains nothing except *mubashshirat* (good news) shall exist until the Day of Resurrection and shall never cease. As you know and have read in the books of Hadith, true visions are a forty-sixth part of perfect prophethood.”⁴²

By contrasting *prophetic* revelation with *saintly* revelation in this manner, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad distinguishes the two not only in form but also in content. In form, only prophetic revelation is transmitted via the agency of Angel Gabriel. In content, only prophetic revelation contains laws. This distinction of only prophetic revelation containing laws is, again, in uniformity with the understanding of classical Muslim theologians. Ibn Arabi, for example, wrote extensively on the subject of the relationship between prophethood and sainthood,⁴³ and he too identified revelation containing laws (*shariah*) as the distinguishing criterion:

“All the forms of revelation we have explained here are to be found in men of God, from among the saints. The revelation that was exclusive to the

prophet, and not for the saint, is the revelation containing the laws (*shariah*).”⁴⁴

Others, like Imam Abdul Wahhab Shirani, confirmed the same:

“The door of prophethood is closed after the Holy Prophet Muhammad and shall not be opened for anyone until the Day of Judgment. However, revelation which does not contain laws (*shariah*) in it remains for the saints.”⁴⁵

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad distinguished the two grades of revelation in his writings by classifying them as *wahy nabuwwat* (prophetic revelation) and *wahy wilayat* (saintly revelation). Consequently, a determination of how Mirza Ghulam Ahmad described the revelations he received is indicative of whether he considered himself a prophet in the theological sense. If he claimed to be a prophet (*nabi* or *rasul*) as opposed to a saint (*wali* or *muhaddath*), he should refer to his revelations as *wahy nubuwwat*. Consistent with his conviction in the finality of prophethood in Prophet Muhammad and belief in prophetic revelation having ended, he refers to the revelations he received as *wahy wilayat*, not *wahy nubuwwat*:

“I believe that it is not *wahy nubuwwat* (prophetic revelation) but *wahy wilayat* (saintly revelation) that the saints receive through the Prophethood of Muhammad due to their perfect following of him. If anyone accuses me of claiming anything beyond this, he departs from honesty and fear of God.”⁴⁶

“I have noticed that at the time of revelation, which descends upon me in the form of *wahy wilayat* (saintly revelation), I feel myself in the hands of an extremely strong external force.”⁴⁷

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s writings on the subjects of prophethood and revelation thus contain the following: 1) declarations of belief in the finality of prophethood in Prophet Muhammad; 2) arguments that the type of revelation granted to prophets has ceased; and 3) clarifications that the type of revelation he receives is the type granted to saints, not prophets. Based on these core beliefs, the word “prophet” found in Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s writings in reference to himself necessitates careful consideration as to its intended meaning. Simply inferring he intended the theological basis of the word unjustifiably diverges from his unambiguous pronouncements of belief in the finality of prophethood and termination of prophetic revelation.

Claim of Muhaddathiyyat and Denial of Prophethood

Academic researchers that have reviewed Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s writings in light of works by Muslim

theologians of the medieval period conclude his descriptions of prophethood are not novel. Specifically, they acknowledged that the manner in which Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explained the concept of prophethood correlates with established principles from the Islamic Sufi tradition.

In an early research work titled *Ahmadiyya Movement: Past and Present*, Spencer Lavan recognizes that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad “often used terms also used by Islamic mystics or Sufis.”⁴⁸ About a decade later, in a much more detailed work titled *Prophecy Continues*, Yohanan Friedmann suggests that Sufi thought seems to lie “in the background of numerous ideas developed by Ghulam Ahmad.”⁴⁹ After exploring some of the similarities, Friedmann concedes, “Ghulam Ahmad’s works are so steeped in Sufi terminology that such points of resemblance could easily be multiplied,”⁵⁰ and goes on to state, “We can thus say that the essential elements of Ghulam Ahmad’s prophethood were not unknown among medieval Sufi thinkers.”⁵¹ He then concludes, “Ahmadi prophethood must therefore be considered a fascinating revival of medieval mystical thought, expressed in the social and political context of the modern period.”⁵² In a more recent work titled *From Sufism to Ahmadiyya*, Adil Hussain Khan, explores Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s writings and traces his teachings to Sufi roots. He reviews Friedmann’s research and acknowledges the compelling contextualization of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s understanding of prophethood in medieval Islamic terms.⁵³

Notwithstanding this correlation with Sufi principles and terminology, the parameters of sainthood versus prophethood in the Sufi tradition itself is viewed by some as being at times unclear. Friedman writes: “In Sufi literature, the *muhaddathun* are credited with the highest spiritual achievements, and the dividing line between them and the prophets is frequently blurred.”⁵⁴ Khan expresses a similar disposition by stating in reference to Sufi writings: “pinnacles of *waliyah* began to blur with prophethood.”⁵⁵ In the same vein, many argue Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s descriptions of his spiritual status go beyond the confines characteristic of the saintly class (*auliya* and *muhaddathun*). It is contended that despite denying that he was claiming prophethood,⁵⁶ Mirza Ghulam Ahmad considered himself a *type* of prophet – a non-legislative (*ghair tashri’i*) prophet who is a manifestation (*baruz*) or shadow (*zill*) of Prophet Muhammad.⁵⁷ This, to many, is tantamount to a claim of actual prophethood.⁵⁸

These contentions, though, neglect the detailed explanations given by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as to what these terms actually signify. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explained that all of the qualified terms he uses – such

as *non-legislative* (*ghair tashri’i*) prophet, *manifestation* (*baruz*) of a prophet, *shadow* or *reflection* (*zill*) of a prophet, etc. – are simply descriptions of a person who attained the status of a saint (*wali* or *muhaddath*). As a result, these terms in which the word “prophet” is used in a qualified or conditional sense do not imply any type of prophethood other than the *partial* prophethood inherent in a saint. For instance, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explains the partial prophethood of a *muhaddath* in the following way:

“If it be argued that the door of prophethood has been closed and a seal has been set on the revelation that descends on prophets, I say that neither the door of prophethood has been closed in all respects nor a seal has been set on every form of revelation. Rather, the door of revelation and prophethood remains partially open for this *ummah* (Muslim community). But it should also be carefully borne in mind that the kind of prophethood which continues forever is not perfect prophethood, as I have just mentioned, but only partial prophethood, termed *muhaddathiyya* (sainthood), which is attained by following the greatest and most perfect of all human beings, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), who is the embodiment of all excellences of perfect prophethood.”⁵⁹

It is this type of *partial* prophethood, by virtue of being a *muhaddath*, that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad unequivocally attributes to himself. Many times, he would confirm his status of being a *muhaddath* when denying the allegation that he claimed to be a prophet, thereby distinguishing and contrasting the two statuses:

“There is no claim of prophethood (by me); on the contrary, the claim is of *muhaddathiyyah* which has been put forward by the command of God. And what doubt is there in this that *muhaddathiyyah* also possesses a strong offshoot of prophethood ...”⁶⁰

“I firmly believe that our Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is *khatam al anbiya* (seal of the prophets) and after him no prophet, neither old nor new, shall appear for this *ummah* (Muslim community). Of course, *muhaddathun* (saints) will come who will be spoken to by God and possess some attributes of full prophethood by way of reflection (*zill*), and in some ways be colored with the color of prophethood. I am one of these.”⁶¹

Noteworthy is that in Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s numerous denials of claiming prophethood, no distinction is made between legislative and non-legislative prophethood, as if there are two types of prophets and

he is only denying being a prophet with a law. Rather, he denies prophethood absolutely and clarifies his status as that of a *muhaddath*. This was actually acknowledged by his contemporary opponents. In the declaration of heresy (*Fatwa-e-Kufr*) issued against him in 1891 by Maulvi Muhammad Hussain Batalvi and signed by a large number of Muslim clerics throughout India, it was argued that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed to be a prophet, yet he considered “at the same time the other name of this prophethood is *muhaddathiyyat*.” The declaration of heresy goes on to argue that the interpretation of *muhaddathiyyat* given by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad “cannot mean anything but prophethood.”⁶² However, no evidence was presented to disprove or undermine in any way the correctness of his detailed definitions. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad based his interpretation of the term “*muhaddath*” on verses of the Quran, authentic hadith reports and supporting views of respected Muslim theologians, as previously shown.

Muhaddath – Spiritual Significance and Metaphorical Implication

In order to understand the terminology used by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, it is essential to appreciate the context in which certain words appear in his writings. Like classical Muslim theologians, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad routinely focuses his writings on the intricacies of spiritual development and the means to attain closeness to the Divine.⁶³ The concept of *fana fir rasul* (meaning, annihilating one’s being into the prophet’s existence), a common feature in lessons from the Sufi tradition, is particularly emphasized in his works. By explaining such spiritual concepts, especially in the various detailed responses to objections from his critics, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad offers insight into the meaning of particular words he employs in his writings.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explained the concept of *fana fir rasul* by expounding on how prophets personify the display of Divine attributes on earth, and how, by following a prophet’s example perfectly, one may attain this level of nearness to the Divine. This form of discipleship entails losing one’s own identity to the extent of merging with the personality of the prophet. He explains this concept by contextualizing it as being at the heart of Sufi teachings on attaining union with the Divine:

“Of all the leaders of Sufism that there have been till the present day, not even one has disagreed with the point that in this religion the path to become the likes of prophets is open, as the Holy Prophet Muhammad has given the glad tidings for spiritual and godly learned persons that: ‘The *ulama* of my *ummah* are like the Israelite prophets’. The words of Abu Yazid Bustami ...

are on this basis, as he says: ‘I am Adam, I am Seth, I am Noah, I am Abraham, I am Moses, I am Jesus, I am Muhammad, peace be upon him and upon all these brothers of his.’ ... Similarly, Sayyid Abdul Qadir Jilani, in his book *Futuh-ul-Ghaib*, refers to this point – that is, that man, by leaving his ego and annihilating himself in God, becomes the like, rather the very form, of the prophets.”⁶⁴

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad further clarifies that by becoming one with a prophet in a spiritual sense, the term “prophet” can be used to describe such a person, by way of metaphor, as a title for the spiritual status attained:

“God bestowed the honor of His full, perfect, pure and holy, communication and revelation to some such persons who reached the stage of *fana fir rasul* to the highest degree, so that there remained no separation. The concept of *ummati* (being a follower) and the meaning of following was found in them to completion and perfection, so that their very being did not remain their own selves, but rather, the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad was reflected in the mirror of their state of engrossment. On the other hand, they received Divine communication and revelation in the fullest and most perfect sense like prophets. So, in this sense, some persons, despite being *ummati* (followers), received the title of *nabi* (prophet).”⁶⁵

Key to appreciating this notion is recognizing that attainment of the high spiritual state of becoming the “like of the prophets” doesn’t actually make one a prophet. Being “like” something necessarily means one is not actually it, but only appears to be so. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explains that this “likeness” to Prophet Muhammad, achieved by giving up one’s own ego and following Prophet Muhammad’s example perfectly, is the state attained by a *muhaddath*:

“The fact that our Holy Prophet is the *khatam an nabiyyin* prohibits the coming of any other prophet. However, a prophet who obtains light from the lamp of the prophethood of Muhammad, who in other words is also called a *muhaddath*, is exempt from this restriction because, due to his obedience to the Holy Prophet and due to his being *fana fir rasul*, he is included within the person of the Last of the Messengers, just as a part is included in the whole.”⁶⁶

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad also describes the concept of *fana fir rasul* as necessarily applying to saints and not prophets because the status of a prophet is antithetical to

the concept of being a follower (*ummati*).⁶⁷ He refines the understanding of the concept of *fana fir rasul* by contrasting its key element of “following” with the independent nature of real and actual prophethood:

“The possessor of full prophethood can never be a follower (*ummati*), and it is absolutely prohibited by the Quran and Hadith that the man who is called messenger (*rasul*) of God in the fullest sense could be a complete sub-ordinate and disciple of another prophet. Almighty God says: ‘We did not send any messenger but that he should be obeyed by God’s permission.’ That is, every messenger is sent to be a master and leader, not to be a disciple and sub-ordinate of someone else.”⁶⁸

Hence, in addition to differentiating prophethood and sainthood in terms of the form and content of the revelation received (i.e. only prophetic revelation is transmitted via Angel Gabriel and only prophetic revelation comprises laws), Mirza Ghulam Ahmad provides another distinguishing criterion: prophets attain their status independently through a direct connection with God⁶⁹, whereas saints acquire their status through dependence on following a prophet.⁷⁰

As a result, in the context of demonstrating the concept of *fana fir rasul*, the conjoined term “follower and prophet” (*ummati wa nabi*) that is found in Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s writings is a description of a *muhaddath*. It does not denote some type of actual prophethood but rather, due to the qualifying word “follower,” is a negation of real prophethood. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad makes this point clear:

“Rendering obedience to this Prophethood (of Muhammad) takes one to God very easily, and one receives the gift of God’s love and His revelation in a much greater measure than people used to before. A perfect follower, though, cannot be just called ‘nabi’ (prophet) because it would be derogatory to the perfect and complete prophethood of Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, both the words *ummati* (follower) and *nabi* (prophet) can jointly be applied to him, because that would not be derogatory to the prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.”⁷¹

Consistent with his various other declarations of being a *muhaddath* and not a prophet, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad affirms the same even in his last major publication before his death, *Haqiqat al-Wahy*, by writing, “I cannot be called only ‘prophet’, but a prophet from one aspect and a follower from another.”⁷²

Understanding the concept of *fana fir rasul* allows for the contextualization of other misunderstood terms used by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in his writings, such as

zill (reflection or shadow) and *baruz* (manifestation).⁷³ For example, regarding the notion of *zilli nabuwwah* (reflection or shadow of prophethood), Mirza Ghulam Ahmad expounds on the principles of *fana fir rasul* by writing:

“When some persons of the Muslim nation turn to the obedience of the Holy Prophet Muhammad with perfect humility, and totally lose themselves in their humbleness, God, finding them like a clear mirror, manifests the blessings of the Holy Prophet through their being. And whatever praise they receive from God, or whatever blessings and signs are displayed by them, all these praises are for the Holy Prophet, and he is the source of all these blessings. But because the perfect follower of the Holy Prophet is a *zill*, the Divine light of that Holy Person can be seen in his *zill* as well. It is not a secret that the shadow has the form of its original. However, the shadow has no existence of its own, and no real attribute, all that it has is an image of its original.”⁷⁴

Similarly, regarding the notion of *baruzi nabuwwah* (manifestation of a prophet), Mirza Ghulam Ahmad also refers to the principle of *fana fir rasul*:

“All the Sufis and the elders of the Muslim nation hold this belief. In fact, they even say that no one can be a perfect follower until he acquires the accomplishments of the Holy Prophet Muhammad in the sense of *baruz* ... When a person shows such perfect obedience to the Holy Prophet that he is, as it were, absorbed and effaced to the extent of being lost in that obedience, his condition at that time is like a mirror showing the image fully and perfectly.”⁷⁵

Leaving no room for doubt, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad verifies the notions of a *zilli-nabi* or a *baruzi-nabi* as being descriptions of the station of sainthood and not of prophethood:⁷⁶

“Sainthood (*wilayah*) is the perfect *zill* of prophethood”⁷⁷

“The whole Muslim nation is agreed that a non-prophet takes the place of a prophet as a *baruz*. This is the meaning of the hadith: *Ulama ummati ka-anbiya Bani Israil* (‘The godly learned ones of my community are like the prophets of Israel’).”⁷⁸

Appreciating these subtleties inherent in the concept of *fana fir rasul* allows one to also realize the spiritual significance to the otherwise ostensibly blasphemous statements made by past saintly Muslim personalities that people have trouble reconciling.⁷⁹ For instance, among the controversial claims and statements made by

saintly Muslim personalities of the past, several have had their disciples replace the name “Muhammad” with their own name in the *kalima* (declaration of faith: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah”). Abu Bakr Shibli had people testify: “There is no God but Allah, and Shibli is His messenger.”⁸⁰ Muin-ud-Din Chisti, had a person recite: “There is no God but Allah, and Chisti is the Messenger of Allah.”⁸¹ Khawaja Habib-ullah Attar similarly told people to consider him to be “the messenger of Allah” when reciting the *kalima*.⁸² These respected spiritual luminaries were not claiming to be prophets, let alone replacements for Prophet Muhammad. Rather, they were speaking in terms of *fana fir rasul*, whereby one attains the spiritual status of union with Prophet Muhammad by becoming his perfect reflection (*zill*) and manifestation (*baruz*). By way of metaphor, in the spiritual realm, it is as though they become Prophet Muhammad.⁸³ Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, using Abu Yazid al-Bistami as an example, writes:

“Remember well that the fruits of perfect obedience [to the Holy Prophet] are never wasted. This is a teaching of Sufism (*Tasawwuf*). If the rank of *zill* (reflection) had not existed, the saints of the *Ummah* would have died. It was exactly this perfect obedience, and the rank of *baruz* (manifestation) and *zill* (reflection), due to which Abu Yazid was called ‘Muhammad’. Upon his so saying, the verdict of heresy was pronounced against him seventy times over, and he was exiled from the city. In brief, the people who oppose us are unaware of these facts.”⁸⁴

According to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, through *fana fir rasul*, “There have been hundreds of persons in whom the ‘reality of Muhammad’ was established, and with God they had the names ‘Muhammad’ and ‘Ahmad’ by way of reflection (*zill*).”⁸⁵

The Claim of Messiahship – A Distinction within a Class

Although classifying himself among the hundreds of *auliya* and *muhaddathun*, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad does make a distinction for himself. He claimed to be the *Mujaddid* (Reformer) of the fourteenth century of the Islamic calendar. He further stated that the *mujaddid* of this century was given the titles Promised Messiah and *Mahdi* due to the multifold mission entrusted to him.⁸⁶ The claims of being *Mujaddid* and *Mahdi* were not used by his opponents to attribute a claim of prophethood to him, as there was a longstanding tradition of saintly persons claiming to be *mujaddids* and the *Mahdi* was always expected to be a person from among the *ummah*. But many interpreted Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s claim of being the Promised Messiah as a *de facto* claim of

prophethood.⁸⁷ Since Jesus the Messiah was a prophet according to the Quran, it was argued that claiming to be the return of Jesus must necessarily entail a claim of a similar status, especially since the hadith report that mentions the second coming of Jesus refers to the coming Messiah as a prophet (*nabi*).

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, though, argued the exact opposite. He explained that the reference in hadith reports that the Promised Messiah is a prophet is not to be taken literally. He reasoned that the term *nabi* is used in a metaphorical sense for a *muhaddath*, just as it is applied metaphorically to the “like of a prophet” by way of *fana fir rasul*. He further pointed out that in hadith reports prophesying the coming Messiah, both the descriptions of prophet and follower are used, which, as already shown, is a description of a *muhaddath*:

“Now it is obvious from all these references that he (the coming Messiah) shall not possess the attribute of complete prophethood in the actual and real manner. However, imperfect prophethood will be found in him, which in other words is called *muhaddathiyya*, and has within it one of the qualities of complete prophethood. So, the fact that he has been called follower and also prophet shows that the qualities of both being a follower and of prophethood will be found in him, just as it is necessary for both these qualities to be found in a *muhaddath*.”⁸⁸

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad also presented various arguments in support of the position that Jesus, the Israelite prophet, could not return to earth and, therefore, could not literally be the subject of this prophecy. The most popular of his arguments in this regard was that Jesus, according to the Quran, died a natural death after escaping an attempt of crucifixion on the cross.⁸⁹ But another argument advanced in support of the belief that Jesus could not return to earth, and as a result the prophecy must refer to one who would be Jesus’ spiritual likeness, is that the Israelite prophet Jesus returning to earth violates the finality of prophethood in Prophet Muhammad:

“The title ‘prophet of God’ for the Promised Messiah found in Sahih Muslim etc. from the blessed tongue of the Holy Prophet is meant in the same metaphorical sense as it occurs in Sufi literature as an accepted and common term for a recipient of Divine communication. Otherwise, how can there be a prophet after the *khatam ul anbiya*?”⁹⁰

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s claim of being the Promised Messiah, therefore, does not equate to a claim of prophethood nor does it challenge his established claim

of being a *muhaddath*. Quite contrarily, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explained a *muhaddath* being the Promised Messiah was necessary to safeguard the doctrine of finality of prophethood in Prophet Muhammad.⁹¹

Literal Application of the Word “Prophet”

One may question why Mirza Ghulam Ahmad did not simply employ the word *muhaddath* in reference to himself in his writings and refrain from using the word *nabi* altogether. Such an approach would seem reasonable since the mere presence of the word *nabi* in his writings caused such a fierce reaction, not to mention it would be expedient given the obvious ammunition it was providing his opponents to attack his legitimacy as a divinely inspired reformer. The simple reason given by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was that the words *nabi* and *rasul* were included in the revelations he received from God. As a result, he was compelled to disclose those divine communications and could not conceal them:

“However, being an appointed one of God (*mamur*), I dare not conceal the word ‘prophethood’ and ‘messengership’ that occur frequently in the communications I receive from God Almighty. But, I declare repeatedly, in such revelations (*ilhamat*), the words *mursal*, *rasul* or *nabi* that occur are not to be taken in their real sense ...”⁹²

The “real sense” referenced by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is the Islamic theological sense. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad further explained that the words “prophet” and “messenger” included in his revelations were only meant in the descriptive sense of the words:

“There are many such revelations in which the word *nabi* or *rasul* has occurred regarding me. However, that person is mistaken who thinks that by this prophethood and messengership is meant real prophethood and messengership ... in fact, by the word *rasul* is only meant ‘one sent by God’, and by the word *nabi* is only meant ‘one who makes prophecies having received intimation from God’, or ‘one who discloses hidden matters’. However, in the terminology of Islam, *nabi* and *rasul* mean those who bring an entirely new *shariah*, or those who abrogate some aspects of the previous *shariah*, or those who are not called followers of a previous prophet, having a direct connection with God without the benefit from a prophet. Therefore, one should be vigilant to see that the same meaning is not taken here.”⁹³

Accordingly, the words “prophet” and “messenger” in Islamic theology have a distinct meaning, distinguishable from the broad etymological applicability of the words. In the literal sense, for purposes of describ-

ing the function of “one who is sent” and “one who expounds hidden truths through knowledge from God,” the words *rasul* and *nabi* categorically apply to a *muhaddath*. The literal meaning of the word *muhaddath* is different and simply does not describe these two functions. As Mirza Ghulam Ahmad stated:

“If one who receives news of the unseen from God is not to be called *nabi*, tell us what should he be called? If it is said that he should be called *muhaddath*, I say that in no lexicon is the meaning *tahdees* (root word of *muhaddath*) ‘making known the unseen’.”

Notwithstanding, in a gesture of goodwill to those who objected to the terminology used in his writings, and as a show of complete transparency for the true meaning intended, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad proposed his detractors simply replace the word *nabi* with *muhaddath* when reading his works to resolve the unintended conflict:

“So I wish to make it clear to all Muslim brothers that, if they are displeased with these words and if these words give injury to their feelings, they may regard all such words as amended, and instead consider me to have used the word *muhaddath* ... I have not the least hesitation in stating my meaning in another form for the conciliation of my Muslim brethren, and that other form is that in every place instead of the word *nabi* the word *muhaddath* should be understood, and the word *nabi* should be regarded as having been deleted.”⁹⁴

If people could not understand a word in its metaphorical sense or according to its linguistic meaning, despite numerous detailed explanations by the author of the word to do so, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad offers the solution of simply considering the objectionable word deleted and replaced with a word that is acceptable. This is the extent to which Mirza Ghulam Ahmad tried to mediate the dilemma of being true to his spiritual experiences and still clarify the intended meaning of certain words in his writings for those who misunderstood them.⁹⁵

Conclusion

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s use of the word “prophet” is accompanied with detailed descriptions of the different meanings of the term and its applicability in varying contexts. Accordingly, when reading the word “prophet” (“*nabi*”) in his writings, it is essential to examine the particular significance intended. For example, the following paragraph from the booklet *Ek Ghalti ka Izala* is often quoted to argue Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed prophethood:

“Wherever I have denied prophethood and messengership, it is only in the sense that I am not the **independent bearer of a law** (*shariah*), nor am I an **independent prophet**. However, in the sense that, **having gained spiritual graces from the Messenger whom I follow**, and **having attained for myself his name**, I have **received knowledge of the unseen from God** through the mediation of the Holy Prophet, I am a messenger and a prophet but **without a new law** (*shariah*). I have never denied being called a prophet in this sense. In fact, this is the sense in which God has addressed me as *nabi* and *rasul*. Nor do I now deny being a prophet and messenger in this sense.”⁹⁶

As demonstrated in this paper, though, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad provides guiding principles to differentiate between the theological sense of the word “prophet” and its metaphorical and linguistic applications: 1) in the Islamic theological sense, the word “prophet” denotes one who has authority over the law by receiving revelation that institutes or modifies legislation; 2) in the Islamic theological sense, the word “prophet” also signifies one who possesses this status through a direct connection with God and not through dependence on following another prophet; 3) in a metaphorical sense, the term “prophet” can be applied to a saint (*wali* or *muhaddath*), pursuant to the Sufi concept of *fana fir rasul*, due to faithful following of a prophet to the extent that one’s own ego is lost in the personality of that prophet; and 4) in a linguistic sense, the term “prophet” can be applied to a saint (*wali* or *muhaddath*) in accordance with its etymological meaning to describe “one who expounds hidden truths through knowledge of God.” Applying these principles to the quote above makes the intended meaning of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s words clear: he denies claiming prophethood in the theological sense, but does not deny the applicability of the word “prophet” to himself in the metaphorical sense or in the sense of its linguistic connotation.⁹⁷

This appreciation of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s definitions of terms he uses in his writings necessitates a critical examination of the declarations of heresy issued against him. Rather than evidence of heresy, these declarations are based on exaggerated claims attributed to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad that fail to recognize his detailed explanations or account for the similar type of language employed by saintly Muslim figures of the past.⁹⁸ In reality, the terminology used by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is only meant to demonstrate the great spiritual heights one may attain by devoting oneself completely to following the example of Prophet Muhammad, the last of the prophets. Thus, far from denigrating the title of *khatam an nabiyyin*, these terms manifest Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s profound love for the incomparable

status of Prophet Muhammad. As Mirza Ghulam Ahmad aptly expressed in a poem:

*After God, I am inebriated
with the love of Muhammad;*

*if this is heresy, then by God I
am the greatest of heretics.*

Endnotes:

- 1 Quote attributed to the French philosopher Voltaire.
- 2 New York: Simon & Schuster (revised edition 1933).
- 3 The Constitution of Pakistan was amended in 1974 (“Second Amendment”), under the government of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, to declare Ahmadis as non-Muslims. A decade later in 1984, Ordinance XX, a legal ordinance promulgated under the regime of Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, prohibited Ahmadis from practicing Islam (or posing as Muslims), a violation of which carried punishment of up to three years imprisonment and a fine.
- 4 Meaning, in accordance with how the term is defined per Islamic religious doctrine or how the term is used pursuant to the terminology of Islamic law.
- 5 Quran, 33:40.
- 6 Sahih al Bukhari, Hadith 3455; Jami at-Tirmidhi, Hadith 2219.
- 7 *Kitab al-Bariyya*, p. 185 (*RK* vol. 13, p. 217); *Tuhfa Golarwiya*, p. 83 (*RK* vol. 17, p. 174); *Kitab al-Bariyya*, p. 184, footnote (*RK*, vol. 13, pp. 217-218). In this paper, English translations of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s original writings are provided with reference to the original publication as well as to *Ruhani Khaza’in* (a popular and accessible compilation of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s publications). The abbreviation *RK* is used with volume and page number provided. Another compilation referenced in this paper is *Majmu’a Ishitiharat*, containing recorded announcements made by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, which is abbreviated as *MI* with volume and page number provided.
- 8 Statement issued in Delhi, October 2, 1891, *MI*, 1986 edition, vol. 1, pp. 230-231.
- 9 *MI*, 1986 edition, vol. 2, pp. 297-298.
- 10 Speech in Delhi Central Mosque, October 23, 1891, *MI*, 1986 edition, vol. 1, p. 255.
- 11 *Ek Ghalti ka Izala* p.6, (*RK*, vol. 18, p. 211).
- 12 Such as Yohannan Friedman and Adil Hussain Khan, whose views on the subject are addressed later in this paper.
- 13 Popular contemporary American Muslim scholar Sheikh Hamza Yusuf discusses the problem of how classical Muslim scholars are sometimes wrongly regarded as heretics using Ibn Arabi and Ibn Taymiyyah as examples: www.youtube.com/watch?v=OH3Lf1Ya1G8, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4oFybKsLZY>
- 14 Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s explanations of terms used to describe spiritual (mystical) concepts not only clarify the language employed in his writings but also provide a basis to better understand and appreciate the terminology found objectionable in the writings of classical Muslim theologians of the Sufi tradition.

- 15 For a comprehensive discussion on Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's beliefs and claims, including critical analysis of quotations from his writings commonly used to advance the argument that he claimed prophethood, refer to Maulana Muhammad Ali's monumental treatise *Prophethood in Islam*, the English translation of the original Urdu work *An Nubuwwat fil Islam* (UK: Maulana Tufail Memorial Literary Trust, 1995; also available online at aaiil.org/text/books/mali/prophethoodislam/prophethoodislam.shtml). Another excellent resource is the evidence presented by Hafiz Sher Muhammad in legal proceedings in South Africa (in which members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement were victorious in establishing their status as Muslims against opposing Sunni religious bodies in a court of law), as compiled by Dr. Zahid Aziz in the book *The Ahmadiyya Case* (USA: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc., 1987; also available online at www.muslim.org/sa-case/evidence/contents.htm).
- 16 The information presented in this section of the paper is primarily from Maulana Muhammad Ali's renowned work, *The Religion of Islam* (Ohio: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Lahore, USA, 2012 edition). It should be noted this work is a non-sectarian discourse on Islam that has been extremely influential in the field of Islamic Studies since the time of its first publication and continues to be today. In 2002, the orthodox Al Azhar Al-Sharif Islamic Research Academy in Cairo, Egypt issued a certificate of authenticity for it, approving its use in traditional Islamic scholarship. The late Grand Imam, Sheikh Muhammad Syed Tantawi, also wrote a Foreword for the publication of the Arabic translation of this book, praising it and praying for blessings upon Maulana Muhammad Ali. Sheikh Tantawi also regularly referred to this book in his lectures and even directed readers to it in his celebrated work, *A Peaceful Dialog with the Pope* (in reply to controversial statements made by Pope Benedict XVI in his Regensburg Lecture of 2006).
- 17 Imam Al Raghbi, *Al-Mufradat fi Gharaibi-l-Quran*.
- 18 Allamah Shaikh Nasr al-Huraini, *Qamus*.
- 19 Ali, *Religion of Islam*, p. 165.
- 20 It appears these two words describe the two capacities of a prophet: *nabi* is used to signify being a recipient of information from God and *rasul* is used to indicate being the conveyer of that message to mankind.
- 21 The Arabic word for "revelation" is *wahy* and, according to the Quran, revelation is a universal phenomenon present in many forms. There are verses stating revelation is granted to the earth (99:1-5) and other inanimate objects (41:11-12), indicating a type of revelation through which Divine laws are established for the operation of the universe. There are verses stating revelation is granted to lower life forms, including insects like the bee (16:68-69), implying instinct in animals is a type of revelation. And, there are verses stating revelation is granted to angels (8:12), those spiritual beings that deliver Divine messages to man.
- 22 Quran 42:51.
- 23 Ali, *Religion of Islam*, p.154-156. Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, prominent religious and political leader in Pakistani history and leading anti-Ahmadiyya proponent, similarly explains this classification of three types of revelation in a response to a question in his monthly magazine. He writes: "You appear surprised at there being *two* types of revelation. Had you read the Quran you would know that this Book mentions *three* types of revelation, only one of which types was collected in the Quran: '*It is not for a mortal that God should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger who reveals by His permission what He [God] pleases.*' Here three forms are described of God sending commandments and guidance to a man. One is direct revelation, i.e., inspiration into the mind. A second is speech from behind a veil. The third is that revelation is sent through a messenger — an angel. The revelations collected in the Holy Quran are only of the third kind." *Tarjuman al-Quran*, September 1961, p. 100.
- 24 This understanding of a form of revelation that continues to be granted to saintly personalities who are not prophets is also advanced by Shia sources; see www.al-islam.org/quran-and-hadith-allamah-sayyid-saeed-akhtar-rizvi/chapter-1-revelation.
- 25 Quran 3:41, 3:44, 19:25.
- 26 Quran 28:7.
- 27 Quran 3:111.
- 28 Quran 10:62-64.
- 29 Ali, *Religion of Islam*, p. 152.
- 30 Sahih al Bukhari, Hadith 6990.
- 31 Sahih al Bukhari, Hadith 6983.
- 32 Imam Raghbi (eleventh century Muslim scholar of Quranic exegesis and Arabic language) explains in *Al-Mufradat fi Gharaibi-l-Quran*: "The Messenger of Allah is reported to have said that revelation has been cut off and nothing remains except *muhabshshirat*, which are true visions a believer sees or is shown to him." Fakhr al-Din al-Razi states in his classic commentary *Al Tafsir al-Kabir*: "The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that *bushra* is a true vision which a believer sees or which is shown to him, and it is also reported from the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that prophethood has gone but *mubashshirat* remains."
- 33 Sahih al Bukhari, Hadith 3469.
- 34 Sahih al Bukhari, Hadith 3689.
- 35 In the famous Commentary of the Quran, *Ruh al-Ma'ani*, the following is presented in reference to Quran 42:51: "In this verse, God has referred to people in general, and not prophets as such, because revelation is not confined to prophets. In previous times, there is the example of Mary and the mother of Moses, who were not prophets but God spoke to them. In our religion, that will be the position of *muhaddathun* of the nation. They will receive revelation." Similarly, in *Aini*, a popular Commentary on Bukhari (vol. vii, p. 614), it is stated: "By *muhaddath* are meant persons to whom God speaks, without them being prophets." Classic Muslim theologians, like Shaikh Ahmad of Sirhind, wrote: "Know, O truthful brother, that the speaking of God with man is sometimes face-to-face. This is for the prophets, and is also for some of their perfect followers due to obedi-

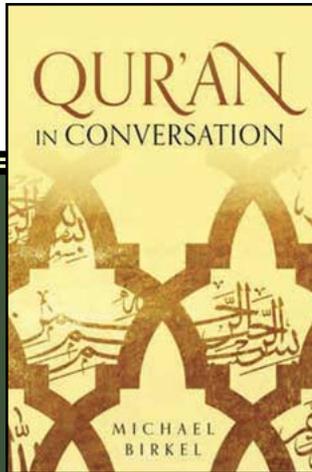
- ence and as inheritance. When a follower receives Divine speech abundantly and frequently in this manner, he is called a *muhaddath*, as was Umar, the chief of the Muslims.” (*Maktubat*, vol. iii, part vii, p. 2, letter no. 51). Likewise, Shah Wali-ullah of Delhi wrote: “The rank of *muhaddath* is such that when a *muhaddath* arises, he does not have to follow conclusions derived by human reasoning, just as the sun eliminates the need for ordinary lamps. For he comes with revelation and the knowledge given to prophets.” (*Tafhimat*, p. 136).
- 36 Vol. III, p. 67.
- 37 P. 153.
- 38 Part II, p. 90, question no. 82.
- 39 For these and other examples, refer to *The Ahmadiyya Case*, Part III – Evidence, Section 4.3.
- 40 *Izala Auham*, p. 577 (*RK*, vol. 3, pp. 411-12). Similar examples of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s belief in the termination of prophetic revelation are as follows: “A seal has been put upon prophetic revelation (*wahy nubuwwat*) since thirteen hundred years ago.” (*Izala Auham*, p. 534; *RK*, vol. 3 p. 387); “It has just been shown that revelation granted to a messenger (*wahy risalat*) has been terminated till the Day of Judgment.” (*Izala Auham*, p. 614; *RK*, vol. 3 p. 432); “How could it be permitted that, despite the fact that our Holy Prophet Muhammad is the last of the Prophets (*khatam al-anbiya*), some other prophet should appear sometime and prophetic revelation (*wahy nubuwwat*) commence?” (*Ayyam as-Sulh*, p. 47; *RK*, vol. 14, p. 279).
- 41 *Taudih Maram*, p. 9-10 (*RK*, vol. 7, pp. 60-61).
- 42 *Id.*
- 43 A valuable resource on this subject is Michel Chodkiewicz’ *Seal of the Saints – Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn Arabi*, (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993).
- 44 *Futuhat Makkīyya*, Part II, p. 376.
- 45 *Al-Yawaqit wal-Jawahir*, p. 37.
- 46 *MI*, vol. ii, no. 151, p. 297.
- 47 *Barakat-ud-Du‘a*, p. 21 (*RK*, vol. 6, p. 22).
- 48 Lavan, Spence, *The Ahmadiyya Movement: Past and Present*, (Amritsar, India: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1976), p. 11.
- 49 Friedmann, Yohanan, *Prophecy Continues, Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background*, (Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 142.
- 50 Friedmann, p. 144.
- 51 Friedmann, p. 146.
- 52 Friedmann, p. 146
- 53 Khan, Adil Hussain, *From Sufism to Ahmadiyya, A Muslim Minority Movement in South Asia*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2015), p.15. Khan, while contrasting the scope of his book with the focus in Friedmann’s, alludes to followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad developing of an ideology concerning prophethood different from the Sufi foundations expressed in Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s writings: “... Friedmann’s study is centered on the medieval background of Ghulam Ahmad’s thought, rather than its religious implications. This excludes subsequent interpretations of Ghulam Ahmad’s claims by the movement, which led to current formulations of the Ahmadi worldview. In contrast, this book focuses more on how Ahmadi religious thought later developed within its own framework as a means of illustrating its influence on contemporary South Asian religion and politics.” (p.15). Khan is referring to the ideology of the Qadian section of the Ahmadiyya Movement, as opposed to the beliefs maintained by the Lahore section. See notes No. 58 and No. 73 for more information on the distinguishing characteristics between the two Ahmadiyya groups.
- 54 Friedmann, p. 88.
- 55 Khan, p. 7.
- 56 A few examples of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad plainly denying any claim to prophethood are:
 “One of the objections of those who call me *kafir* is that they say: This man claims prophethood and says I am one of the prophets. The answer is that you should know, O brother, that **I have not claimed prophethood**, nor have I said to them that I am a prophet. But they were hasty and made a mistake in understanding my words ... It does not befit me that I should claim prophethood and leave Islam and become an unbeliever ... **How could I claim prophethood when I am a Muslim?**” (*Hamamat al-Bushra*, p. 79; *RK*, vol. 7, pp. 296-297).
 “By way of a fabrication, **they slander me by saying that I have made a claim to prophethood**. But it should be remembered that all this is a fabrication. Our belief is that the Holy Prophet Muhammad is the *Khatam al-anbiya*” (*Kitab al-Bariyya*, p. 182, footnote; *RK*, vol. 13, p. 215).
 “**I make no claim to prophethood**. This is your mistake, or you have some other motive in mind. Is it necessary that he who claims to receive revelation also becomes a prophet?” (*Jang Muqaddas*, p. 67; *RK*, vol. 6, p. 156).
 “And I have been called prophet (*nabi*) by Allah **by way of metaphor, not by way of reality (*haqiqat*)**.” (*Haqiqat al-Wahy*, Supplement, p. 64; *RK*, vol. 22, p. 154).
- 57 Friedmann, for example, depicts Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s denials of claiming prophethood as having “gradually faded away” leading him to begin “considering himself a nonlegislative and “shadowy” prophet without reservation.” (Friedmann, p.133).
- 58 This applies to the majority of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s followers, not only his opponents. Six years after the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement died, a split occurred in the Movement in 1914 concerning the theological issue of the status of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The son of the Founder of the Movement, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, who assumed control over the community as “Khalifa”, advanced the belief that his father was a real prophet of God. The majority of the fourteen people selected by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to hold positions on the Sadr Anjuman Ahmadiyya (the governing body created by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad for purposes of administering the affairs of the Movement, as outlined in his will, *Al Wasīyyat*, and which continued to function as the governing body of the Movement during the leadership of Maulana Nur-u-Din) rejected this claim. This led to their separation from Qadian, along with others who deemed the allegation that Mirza

Ghulam Ahmad claimed prophethood as innovation, and the forming of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam in Lahore where they continued the practical missionary work set out by the Founder of the Movement. Distinguished personalities such as Maulana Muhammad Ali (famous translator of the Quran into English and author of world-renowned Islamic literature) and Khwaja Kamual-ud-Din (founder of the historic Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust in England) were among the founding members of the Lahore section of the Movement. The Lahore Ahmadiis maintained that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad never claimed to be real prophet, only a saint (*muhaddath* or *wali*) to whom the word “prophet” can be applied in a metaphorical sense or according to its linguistic meaning. The Lahore Ahmadiis affirm it is only in this sense that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad employed the term “prophet” in reference to himself and only in this way that his followers referred to him as such prior to the split in 1914.

- 59 *Taudih Maram*, pp. 18-19 (*RK*, vol. 3, p. 60).
- 60 *Izala Auham*, p. 422 (*RK*, vol. 3, pp. 320-21).
- 61 *Nishan Asmani*, p. 28 (*RK*, vol. 4, pp. 30-31).
- 62 *Fatwa-e-Kufr*, referenced in Maulana Muhammad Ali’s *The Ahmadiyya Movement*, Lahore: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam, 1973 English edition.
- 63 In his paper *Islami Usool ki Falasafi*, for example, he provides a masterful exposition on the nature of the soul being the spirit of God breathed into each human, how this necessarily implies that each person possesses the Divine attributes within them, and that by exercising these attributes in daily life one becomes closer to God, which is the essence of true salvation. The English translation, under the title *The Teachings of Islam*, is published by Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam, Lahore (USA), (2012 edition).
- 64 *Izala Auham*, pp. 258-9 (*RK*, v. 3, p. 230-231).
- 65 *Al-Wasiyyat*, pp. 29–30 (*RK*, vol. 20, pp. 311-12).
- 66 *Izala Auham*, p. 575 (*RK*, vol. 3, pp. 410-411).
- 67 For instance, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explains: “The meanings of *rasul* (messenger) and *ummati* (follower) are opposite to each other.” (*Izala Auham*, p.575; *RK*, vol. 3, p. 410); “These two concepts (discipleship and prophethood) are opposite to each other.” (*Review Mubahasa*, p. 8; *RK*, vol. 19, p. 216).
- 68 *Izala Auham*, p.569 (*RK*, vol. 3, p. 407).
- 69 Mirza Ghulam Ahmad also writes: “However, in the terminology of Islam, *nabi* (prophet) and *rasul* (messenger) mean ... those who are not called followers of a previous prophet and have a direct connection with God without the benefit from a prophet. Therefore, one should be vigilant to see that the same meaning is not taken here.” *Al-Hakam*, August 17, 1899, page 6.
- 70 Mirza Ghulam Ahmad also writes: “A *muhaddath*, who is a ‘sent one’, is a follower and also, in an imperfect sense, a prophet. He is a follower because he fully follows the *shariah* of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and receives benefit from the light of his [Prophet Muhammad’s] prophethood. And he is a prophet because God makes his affairs like those of prophets. God has made the position of *muhaddath* as an intermediate one between prophets and followers. Although he is a follower in the fullest sense, he is also a prophet in one sense. And a *muhaddath* must be the like of some prophet, and receive from God the very name which is the name of that prophet.” *Izala Auham*, p. 569 (*RK*, vol. 3, p. 407).
- 71 *Al-Wasiyyat*, pp. 27-8 (*RK*, vol. 20, pp. 311-13)
- 72 p. 150 (*RK*, vol. 22, p. 154). In this book, he also affirms: “And I have been called prophet (*nabi*) by Allah by way of metaphor, not by way of reality (*haqiqat*).” (*Haqiqat al-Wahy*, Supplement, p. 64; *RK*, vol. 22, p. 154).
- 73 One may question whether the dispute between the Lahore and Qadian sections of the Ahmadiyya Movement is simply a matter of semantics, in which one group uses the word *muhaddath* concerning the status of the Founder of the Movement and the other uses terms like *baruzi-nabi* or *zilli-nabi*. The real point of contention, rather, lay in the implications of the Qadian Section’s belief: that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a prophet in the sense that it required all Muslims to believe in him in order to remain within the fold of Islam. The Lahore section categorically rejected this notion. See Maulana Muhammad Ali’s *The Split in the Ahmadiyya Movement* (Columbus: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam, Lahore (USA), 1994 edition) and Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad’s confirmation of the *takfiri* position in his responsive book *The Truth about the Split* (UK: Islam International Publications, 2007 edition). Relatedly, the issue of whether belief in a person is required in order to be included in a faith tradition was identified by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as another distinguishing characteristic between a prophet (*nabi*) and a saint (*muhaddath*): “The point is worth remembering that to call the denier of one’s claim a *kafir* is only the privilege of those prophets who bring a *shariah* and new commandments from God. Apart from the possessors of *shariah*, all the others who are *muhaddathun*, no matter how high a rank they may have with God and how exalted they may be with the robe of Divine revelation, no one becomes a *kafir* by denying them.” *Tiryaq al-Qulub*, p. 130 (*RK*, vol. 15, p. 432).
- 74 *Barahin Ahmadiyya*, Part III, Section 1, p. 243 (*RK*, vol.1, pp. 268-269).
- 75 *Malfuzat*, vol. 4 (of 5 volume edition), pp. 405-406 (Talk delivered on September 24, 1905).
- 76 For examples of respected Muslim theologians describing the terms *zill* and *baruz* and attributing the terms to saints, see *The Ahmadiyya Case*, Part III “The Evidence”, Section 9.
- 77 *Hujjat-Ullah*, p. 24 (*RK*, vol. 12, p. 162).
- 78 *Ayyam as-Sulh*, p. 163 (*RK*, vol. 14, p. 411).
- 79 A compilation of such statements made by eminent saintly Muslim personalities is provided in *The Ahmadiyya Case*, Part III “The Evidence”, Section 7.
- 80 *Saif a-Rabbani*, p. 100; *Al-Insan al-Kamil*, Vol. ii, p. 46; *Tazkira Ghausiyya*, p. 315; *Mif-tah al-Ashiqeen*, p. 16.
- 81 *Fawa'id as-Salikeen*, p. 18
- 82 *Manawi Bahr al-Irfan*, vol. I, p. 179
- 83 Relatedly, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad writes: “At this point, most laypersons stumble, and thousands of saints, holy men and prophets are mistakenly raised by them to the divine

- pedestal. The fact is that when spiritual and heavenly concepts are made public, people have difficulty comprehending them. Eventually, they distort them somewhat and take metaphor to be reality, thus resulting in serious error and misguidance.” *Government Angrezi aur Jihad*, p. 26 (RK, vol. 17, pp. 26-27).
- 84 *Malfuzat*, vol. 4 (of 5 volume edition), p. 406 (Talk delivered on September 24, 1905).
- 85 *Ainah Kamalat Islam*, p. 346 (RK, vol. 5, p. 346).
- 86 Noteworthy is that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad only used the word “claim” (*dawa*) when proclaiming being the *Mujaddid* of the era, the Promised Messiah and the awaited *Mahdi*. Whenever he used the word “prophet” in reference to himself it was always in a descriptive manner, never by way of announcing some type of “claim”.
- 87 For instance, Khan writes: “The messianic claim in particular was used to imply that his spiritual status had arrived at some level of prophethood, inferior in his rank to the prophethood of Muhammad, but nonetheless commissioned by God himself for the benefit of humanity.” (Khan, p.6).
- 88 *Izala Auham*, pp. 532-533 (RK, vol. 3, p. 385). Mirza Ghulam Ahmad also explained: “And this must be remembered that the claim of being the Promised Messiah is not in any way greater than the claim of being a recipient of divine communication (*mulham min allah*) or a *Mujaddid* from God. It is evident that anybody who enjoys this status of divine communication, all his names from Allah, such as the Messiah or the like of Moses, are justified for him.” *A'inah Kamalat Islam*, p. 340 (RK, vol 5, p. 341).
- 89 See *Jesus in India*, English translation of *Maseeh Hindustan Mein* (London: Islam international Publications, 1995).
- 90 *Anjam Atham*, footnote, pages 27–28 (RK, vol. 11, p. 28). Mirza Ghulam Ahmad also writes: “If the same Messiah, the Messenger of Allah and the possessor of a Book (*sahib-i-kitab*), on whom Gabriel used to descend, would reappear, then he would never be a student of anyone for learning the laws of the *shariah* of Muhammad (pbuh) but, as is the practice of God, divine revelation would descend on him through Gabriel and all the laws and commandments of the *shariah* of Muhammad (pbuh) would be revealed to him afresh in a new way, new shape and new language and, as compared with this new book which would be revealed from Heaven, the Quran would be abrogated.” (*Izala Auham*, p. 585; RK, vol. 3, p. 416).
- 91 The following quote is often advanced by the Qadian section of the Ahmadiyya Movement to argue Mirza Ghulam Ahmad considered himself to be a prophet due to his status being beyond all other saints: “In short, I alone have been honored with so great a share of divine revelation and knowledge of the unseen as has not been bestowed on any of the *auliya*, *abdul* and *aqtab* among the Muslims before me. For this reason, I alone have been given the title “nabi,” and no one else deserving it, because it implies frequency of revelation and abundance of disclosure of the unseen, a condition which is not satisfied by any of them.” (*Haqiqat al-Wahy*, p. 391 (RK, vol. 22, pages 406-7). Here, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad distinguishes himself from previous saintly personalities by pointing to the fact that he is the Messiah foretold in hadith reports about whom the term *nabi* was used to describe him being a recipient of abundance of divine revelation. Clearly, he is arguing a particular distinction within the class of saints in the Muslim community. Accordingly, this quotation actually undermines the allegation that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed a status beyond that of the saintly class.
- 92 *Anjam Atham*, p. 22 (RK, vol. 11, p. 27).
- 93 *Al-Hakam*, 17 August 1899, page 6. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad also wrote: “It is obvious that he who is sent by God in His envoy, and an envoy is called *rasul* in Arabic. And he who discloses news of the unseen received from God is called *nabi* in Arabic. The meanings in Islamic terminology are different. At this place, only the linguistic meaning is intended.” (*Arba'in*, No. 2, p. 18; RK, vol. 17, p. 366).
- 94 Announcement dated February 3, 1892 issued in Lahore (*MI*, vol. 1, p. 313).
- 95 Both the opponents of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as well as the majority of his followers (the Qadian Section of the Ahmadiyya Movement) interpret Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s use of the term ‘*nabi*’ in reference to himself in a theological sense. This has a striking resemblance to what many believe to have been the case with Jesus the Messiah. Jesus’ use of terms like “son of God,” as relayed in the Gospels, were viewed in a theological sense by both Jews (who argued he was committing blasphemy) and Christians (who believed he was claiming a part of divinity in fulfilment of prophecy). Others argue Jesus was speaking in metaphorical terms only and point to such language being present elsewhere in scripture. Similarly, it is the Muslim position that Jesus was neither a blasphemer nor a claimant of divinity, but rather a prophet of God; hence, any terms like “Son of God” used by him could not have been employed in the theological sense.
- 96 *Ek Ghalti ka Izala*, (bolding added) (RK, vol. 18, pp. 210-211).
- 97 In the opening lines of *Ek Ghalti ka Izala*, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad stresses the need to fully understand and apply his previous explanations of the terms he uses when discussing his claims. He warns, those “not having had the occasion to study my books carefully, not having stayed in my company for a sufficient length of time to complete their knowledge” end up in error. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s cautionary advice in the opening lines of this booklet parallel the premise of this paper. Moreover, they plainly refute the allegation made by Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad that this booklet evidences a change in Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s claim and, as a result, his previous denials of prophethood are to be considered abrogated (see *Haqiqat an-Nubuwwat* published in 1915). For a detailed review of *Ek Ghalti ka Izala*, with references to corresponding explanations from Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s other writings, refer to: <https://www.muslim.org/noclaim/gh-trans.htm#1>.
- 98 Respected contemporary Islamic theologian Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, founder of Al-Mawrid Institute of Islamic Sciences, makes the following conclusions while discussing the claim of prophethood attributed to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad: 1) Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was in essence a Sufi and he used Sufi terminology, such as *zilli nabi*, *baruzi nabi*, in his books; 2) Mirza Ghulam Ahmad qualifies the use of the

word “nabi” as *zilli, baruzi*, etc; 3) In the writings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, all of them, there is no explicit or clear claim of prophethood; 4) Even in the time of the first Khalifa, Hakim Nuruddin, this understanding of his claims remained the same; 4) Mirza Mahmud Ahmad, the son of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, later expanded on his father’s claims which resulted in a claim of full prophethood being attributed to him. See recorded Meezan lecture (in Urdu) at <https://www.javedahmedghamidi.org/#!/video/5ab00b139a831db90fcab556>. ■



- *Qur'an in Conversation* reflects how this sacred text of Islam comes into dialogue with the contemporary world through the voices of the eloquent interpreters gathered in this volume.
- In *Qur'an in Conversation*, author Michael Birkel engages North American Muslim religious leaders and academics in conversations of scriptural interpretation. Scholars, practicing imams, and younger public intellectuals wrestle with key suras of the Qur'an.
- *Qur'an in Conversation* demonstrates a wide spectrum of interpretation and diversity of approaches in reading Islam's scripture. The discussions directly address key issues in Muslim theology--good versus evil, the nature of God, and the future of Islam. Younger North American Muslims read the Qur'an in varied ways; this is analogous to the diverse ways in which Jews and Christians have interpreted their own holy books.
- Michael Birkel welcomes people of goodwill into a public conversation about the current role of Western Muslims in Islam. *Qur'an in Conversation* encourages non-specialists and Muslim scholars alike to imagine how the Qur'an will be interpreted among North American Muslims in years to come.

Includes a chapter by Fazeel S. Khan titled "The Final Prophet"

Continuity and Change: Historical Roots and Contemporary Expression of the Ideals of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement of the United States*

**Prof. Michael Birkel,
Earlham School of Religion,
Richmond, Indiana, USA**

A virtual visitor to a website of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society (www.muslim.org) discovers the following heading: “The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement: presenting Islam as peaceful, tolerant, rational, inspiring.” The intent of this essay is to explore the early roots and contemporary expressions of chiefly the first two of these qualities within the Lahore Ahmadiyya.

Jihad by the Pen

The Ahmadiyya Movement has stressed non-violent means from its beginning, promoting interreligious respect and peace. The founder of the movement, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, faced religious conflict on several fronts. He saw himself as a reformer of Islam, which brought him into strife with Muslims who were not in a disposition to be reformed. First, other Muslims regarded the Ahmadis as heretical sectarians. Additionally, after the death of the founder, there was division with the movement itself, which led to conflict between the two factions. Furthermore, Christian missionaries in India engaged in polemics with Islam and its teachings in an effort to convert Muslims. Finally, Militant Hindu groups regarded Islam as a pollution on the pure Hindu soil. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad called for a reasoned response to these attacks. The time for jihad by the sword was past. The times called for a jihad by the pen. In an essay “Pen Not Sword,” he wrote, “You should understand it well that the need of the time is not the wielding of the sword; it is the pen that has to be used. The doubts that our opponents have expressed about Islam and the assaults that different sciences have made, have drawn my attention to the fact that equipped with the weapon of the pen, I should enter the battlefield and show them the miraculous bravery of Islam and its powers.”¹

* From the outset of this essay, I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to Fazeel S. Khan, the Secretary of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society, who gave graciously of his time to many questions, pointing me toward bibliography and offering reflections from his personal experiences.

While physical violence is renounced, there is a clear polemical quality to this undertaking. Islam was under attack and must be vindicated. As will be seen, in other writings this defensive approach is lightened, giving way to a more reconciling ideal. Here, however, the pen is regarded as a weapon of defense. He frankly regards the relationship with critics as a battlefield, although the contest is to be conducted with words, not arms. His words are reminiscent of the early Meccan period in the history of Islam, when Muslims were admonished to combat their oppressors with jihad through the Qur'an itself and through patient endurance (*sabr*).² In his book *In the Footsteps of Muhammad*, Tariq Ramadan (who is not an Ahmadi) describes it as follows:

As for the Prophet, he also persevered: whenever his opponents attacked him, he used the Quran to answer, protect himself, and resist. This is what Revelation clearly taught him with this verse, which marks the first occurrence of the word jihad in the Quran: Therefore do not obey the negators, but strive against them [*jahidhum*] with the Quran with the utmost resistance [*jihadan kabira*]. [Quran, 25:52]³

Ramadan goes on to state that the text of the Qur'an serves as the Muslim community's spiritual and intellectual defense. It is the means of resistance against their oppression. "The text liberates the real strength in people, that which has the power to resist and overcome all the persecutions in this world, because it calls for the Life beyond the illusions of this life."⁴

For Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, it is the word that is the means of striving. Like Ramadan's portrayal of the early Muslims, the revealed word of the Qur'an is a source of strength, but the situation of late-British India calls for new words as well. The pen here is not the Qur'an alone but also new writings based on Quranic principles to respond to new contexts.

In the final days of his life, in May 1908, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was in the process of preparing an address entitled "Message of Peace," which he intended to deliver to an interreligious audience of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs. The text is an invitation to peaceful relations among the contentious followers of these faiths. The author calls for a breadth of sympathy among practitioners of different religions. Drawing on the universal element of Islamic self-understanding—including the concept of a God that has sent a prophetic message to all people—he appeals for respect for all religions.

My dear countrymen, that religion is no religion which does not inculcate broad sympathy, nor does that man deserve to be called man who does not have a sympathetic soul within

him. Our God has not withheld His bounty from any people... It is our duty, therefore, to live as true and sincere friends, and sympathise with one another.⁵

Writing before the tragedies and horrors of the Partition of 1947, when millions died in the aftermath of the separation of India and Pakistan, he calls for national unity:

It does not become any of us, therefore, to deny ourselves the blessings of unity. Hindus and Muslims are two communities about whom it is impossible to imagine that either of them can, at any time, turn the other out of the country. On the contrary, the two communities are now inextricably bound together. ... Friends! you are now an enlightened people, and it is time you cleared your hearts of all hatred, and advanced in mutual goodwill and friendliness. It is time that men of your intelligence gave up unkindness and took to charity... I invite you to peace at a critical time when peace is urgently needed.⁶

He does not endorse the Hindu notion of Krishna as an incarnation of the divine, but he does acknowledge that "there can be no doubt at all that he was a prophet of his time and an *Avatar*; and that he was favoured by God with His word."⁷ While most Hindus would not agree with this assessment of Krishna, it is clearly a generous statement from a Muslim, since many other Muslims would have regarded devotees of Krishna as idolaters, the greatest of sinners in Islam. Similarly, he honors Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, as practically a Muslim and as one who sought to make peace between Hindus and Muslims. Because Mirza Ghulam Ahmad considers himself to have been favored with the word of God, he is prepared to acknowledge divine inspiration among others. Speaking as a Muslim, he extends this courtesy to the Hindu scriptures, despite their imperfections from an Islamic point of view:

we regard the Vedas as from God, and believe the *Rishis* to have been holy and sacred. It is true that the teachings contained in the Vedas have failed to promote the worship of the One God... Still our own firm belief, according to the Quranic teaching, is that the Vedas are not a fabrication of man, for a human fabrication does not have the power to draw millions of men to itself and to establish a system that can endure for ages.⁸

In an effort to make peace, he proposes that "we, followers of the Ahmadiyya Movement, will always believe in the Vedas, and will speak of the Vedas and the

Rishis with respect and love.”⁹ In return, Hindus will be required to acknowledge Muhammad as an apostle and a prophet and to speak of him with respect and honor. In an extraordinary gesture of openness, he is ready to pledge his community of Muslims to abstinence from beef:

if the Hindus sincerely accept our Holy Prophet as a true prophet of God, and believe in him, the gulf which separates us from them owing to our slaughtering of cows should also be made up. It is not obligatory for us to use everything that we believe to be lawful. There are many things which we consider lawful but which we never use. To be kind and tolerant to our fellow beings is as important a religious injunction as to believe in one God, and it is not against the law of God to abandon an unnecessary thing for the sake of a necessary and useful purpose.¹⁰

He invokes the well-known verse from the Qur’an, “There is no compulsion in religion.” (2:255) While he unapologetically adheres to the superiority of Islam, he exhibits an astonishing degree of openness and respect to believers in other faiths.

Muhammad Ali

The first leader of the Lahore faction of the Ahmadiyya Movement echoed the words of his teacher. Commenting on the fourth verse of Sura 98 of the Qur’an, “[God] who taught by the pen,” Maulana Muhammad Ali reflects the same understanding of the role of the pen:

The mention of the pen in this, the very first, revelation of the Holy Prophet, is significant, and it not only indicates, as Rodwell says, “the powerful help for propagating the knowledge of the Divine Unity” which the Holy Prophet was to find in the pen, but signifies as well that the pen should be specially used in guarding the revelation which was to be granted to the Holy Prophet. It is a fact that the pen has played an important part in the propagation of Islam as well as in the protection of the Qur’an against corruption of every sort.¹¹

Muhammad Ali’s comments on the occurrence of the word *jihad* in the Qur’an likewise eschew violence. He insists that the primary meaning of the word is “striving” or “exertion,” and he cites the great medieval commentator Fakhr al-Din Razi (1149-1209 C.E.) to support this claim.¹² Ali’s footnote to the final verse of Sura 22 similarly states that “a Muslim is therefore one who leads a life of peace, *peace with God...and peace with man*, which means that he causes no injury to any man.”¹³

In addition to his monumental translation and commentary on the Qur’an, the heart of Muhammad Ali’s program of reform and renewal can be found in his work, *The Religion of Islam*, first published in English in 1936. A lengthy chapter of 43 pages is devoted to the topic of jihad. It begins, “A very great misconception prevails with regard to the duty of *jihad* in Islam, by assuming that the word *jihad* is supposed to be synonymous with *war*.”¹⁴ The discussion begins with the early Meccan revelations, continues through the Meccan portions of the Qur’an, and then engages hadith, Islamic jurisprudence, Muslim history, and more. The gist of the argument is that *jihad* means, once again, striving. It has no direct implication of warfare. The author is clear that Islam is not pacifist: defensive violence is permitted, but the faith is not to be spread by war.

To sum up, neither in the earlier revelations nor in the later is there the slightest indication of any injunction to propagate Islam by the word. On the other hand, war was clearly allowed as a defensive measure up to the last. It was to be continued only so long as religious persecution lasted, and when that ceased, war was to cease *ipso facto*.¹⁵

The chapter considers additional questions related to war and other forms of violence. It treats the acceptable conditions for war and the proper conduct of combatants, and it argues for the abolition of slavery and against capital punishment for apostasy. Ali’s chapter on jihad, it could be said, outlines a program for relations between Muslims and other-than-Muslims.

Messiah, Mahdi, and Mujaddid

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s teachings on peace are deeply connected to his self-understanding as the promised Messiah, the Guided One (Mahdi), and the One Who Brings Renewal (Mujaddid) of his age. He taught that each age of Muslim history has its Mujaddid, a divinely-appointed figure who would bring vitality to Islam, to arouse it from lethargy or corruption. He saw himself as the bringer of such renewed life to Islam for his historical moment. Additionally, he saw himself as the Messiah. For centuries, many Muslims believed that Jesus did not die a physical death but was taken up by God into the heavenly realm, from which he would return at the end of time. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that Jesus was not bodily present in the celestial realm but instead died a physical death. Rather than Jesus literally returning to earth, someone who bore a spiritual resemblance to Jesus would appear and would usher in a triumph of Islam. Ahmadis believe that this person was their Founder. In what sense was Mirza Ghulam Ahmad a mirror of Jesus? Muslim and especially Sufi teaching regarded Jesus as a prophet of peace. In his

book *Jihad and the British Government*, Mirza Ghulam wrote,

Look, I have come to you with a Commandment, and that is: now *jihad* with sword is abolished but the *jihad* of cleansing your Self continues. This is not from me; rather it is the Will of God...when the Messiah comes, he will terminate religious wars. Therefore, I command those who are included in my army to retreat from such thoughts, cleanse their hearts, promote feelings of human mercy in themselves and become supporters of the compassionate. Spread peace on earth for this will propagate their religion and wonder not how it shall come to pass.¹⁶

In the same work, he declares that “The teachings now which we emphasize are ‘love thy enemy’ and ‘wish the best for the creatures of God’. The person who originally emphasized these teachings was the great prophet whose name is Jesus.”¹⁷ Therefore, he continues, “In the position of the Messiah, my job is to stop the brutal and blood shedding attacks of Muslims, as has been clearly stated in *ahadith* that when the Messiah will come to the world again he will stop all religious wars. So it is happening now.”¹⁸

In other words, the office of the Founder as Messiah and the peaceful dimension of his teachings are intimately interrelated.

Muhammad Ali adheres to his Founder’s teachings about his titles and offices as Messiah and Mahdi, as is evident, for example, from his book *The Second Coming of Jesus*, which remains in print and easily available online.¹⁹ It may be worthy of note, however, that the topic comes up infrequently in what are his most translated works: his translation and commentary on the Qur’an, and *The Religion of Islam*. The former contains very few references to the Messiah,²⁰ and the term does not appear at all in the extensive index of the latter. This observation is in no way meant to suggest that these two texts are intentionally concealing Ahmadiyya teachings. Instead, the point here is that these highly accessible volumes prefer to focus on the practical applications of Ahmadiyya ideals, such as peace and tolerance, rather than the unique titles of the Founder. To focus on the latter could perhaps make it more difficult for non-Ahmadi Muslim readers to be open to the spiritual ideals to which the movement aspires. As this essay will consider, among other things, the reception of Ahmadiyya teachings among the wider Muslim world, this observation may be useful.

Recent Presentations of Teachings

Many summaries of Lahore Ahmadiyya teachings can be found. Two will suffice as examples of how the movement presents itself today.

In Zahid Aziz’s, *Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement: History, Beliefs, Aims and Work*, the author describes the movement as spiritual (the spiritual world is real, and it is necessary for humans to attain nearness to God), rational (questioning miraculous stories that are presented without evidence), liberal (a stance that is derived from the Qur’an and the Prophet themselves), modern (as opposed to a rejection of the modern world and its developments), peaceful (proclaiming that religious violence is prohibited by Islam), tolerant (to all kinds of Muslims, and to non-Muslims as well, promoting interreligious understanding and cooperation).²¹ The movement is “tolerant, rational, progressive, compassionate, peace-loving and highly spiritual.”²²

Similarly, in a special issue of *The Islamic Sunrise* devoted to countering charges that Islam is violent and extremist, Islam is described in these terms: nonsectarian (all Muslims are truly Muslims), rational, not aspiring to political power, universal (recognizing the truth and goodness in all religions), tolerant (“There is no compulsion in religion”), supportive of women (a woman is a “full, responsible human being” who should have “control over determining the course of her life”), living (in the sense that God still speaks to human beings), highly moral, heart-winning (in the sense of persuasive), and complete (there have been and will be no prophets after Muhammad). The article in which this is found asserts repeatedly that those who urge violence for religion are enemies of Islam.²³

These two sources, especially the latter, are responses to the specific critiques faced by Muslims today, yet they are in harmony with the writings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and Muhammad Ali. The latter’s *The Religion of Islam* and his commentary on his translation of the Qur’an can provide evidence for all these claims regarding the true nature of Islam. In other words, while the context faced by contemporary Muslims has changed, the message of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement has been consistent. There are of course other issues that prevail. The movement, for example, must continue to defend its orthodoxy, as Ahmadiyya is still suspected of claiming that their Founder had the same prophetic status as Muhammad. In the publications of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, this still requires much attention, as the movement must be seen as legitimately Muslim in order to spread its message of peace, tolerance, rationality, and modernity to non-Ahmadi Muslims. The governing law in Pakistan, for example, continues to regard Ahmadiyya as not worthy of the

name Muslim, resulting in varying forms of persecution and injustice, such as prohibiting Ahmadis from making the required pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the obligatory pillars of Islam.²⁴

A Changed World

Of course, the Muslim world has changed dramatically in the past century since the days of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and Muhammad Ali. The historical caliphate ended with the decline of the Ottoman Empire, which altered both how Muslims saw themselves and how the rest of the world perceived them. Then there arose movements of what are often called Political Islam, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, beginning in Egypt and then extending beyond. Around the same time, the fortunes in the Gulf changed, which gave way to well-funded efforts to export Wahhabism. This in turn resulted in conflicts among Muslims in areas where the Wahhabis sent their missionaries, such as in Africa. Political Islam has continued to cause unrest in many areas. The events and aftermath of September 11, 2001, had a massive impact on the Muslim world. In addition to the war and strife that has continued in Iraq and Afghanistan and their effects on neighboring states, 9/11 sent shock waves throughout the Muslim world. Previous to the tragedies of that day many Muslims, while perhaps not in full sympathy with increasing terrorist acts carried out in the name of Islam, understandably held some resentment against Western influence on their local experience and had not yet thought through or clearly articulated their attitude toward religiously sanctioned violence. The attacks of 9/11 forced the issue of discussing such matters as the meaning of jihad, and the conditions and limits of permissible war according to Islam. Muslims in many lands felt compelled to reflect on whether it was permissible for Muslims to be loyal to a non-Muslim government, and whether Western-style democracy was compatible with principles of Islamic governance. Although the overwhelming majority of Muslims did not live their lives guided by extremist worldviews, 9/11 forced Muslims to examine the sources on which such views were based. The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement perceived that this was an hour of need for their message regarding the nature of Islam and the urgency of reform. The movement made efforts to promote its peaceful and tolerant understanding of Islam in numerous areas that face such conflict.

Outreach to Settings Experiencing Conflict

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement continues to offer its teachings to the wider world, particularly in settings where there is conflict and therefore need for its message of peace and tolerance. The attention of this essay therefore turns to scenes of the movement's activity and

the reception that it finds there. The intent here is to juxtapose the original message of the movement with its current vitality in a changed world.

In many countries, the pattern of work is similar. Often the first step is to prepare translations of materials into the local language, or a shared second language. After translation, the next task is or prepare a plan for distribution in the country or region where the language is spoken or read. Here collaboration with local like-minded groups is central. The leadership of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society (which serves as the translation and publication arm of the international Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement) seeks to identify a Muslim organization that is in harmony with their teachings about peace and tolerance and that is willing to promote their literature on a wide scale. Often, it seems to this writer, the Lahore Ahmadis choose a setting where they perceive that their approach to Islam is especially needed. The result is that they find themselves drawn to parts of the world where there is conflict. While such work must be satisfying, it is not always easy or even safe.²⁵

The status of Muslims within the Russian Federation is complex. Even though the conversion of inhabitants from traditional, indigenous religions continued through the nineteenth century, the Russian empire and the post-Soviet Russian Federation has a strong image of itself as Orthodox Christian. Furthermore, Russia found itself in competition with neighboring Muslim-majority lands, from the Ottoman and Persian Empires to their successor states today. Additionally, the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and their neighbors have played a role in Russian and Soviet political history. The rise of the independence of Muslim-majority countries in Central Asia as well as in the Caucasus has left some such as the Chechens, who remain within the boundaries of the Russian Federation, zealous for autonomy. The rise of international political Islam as well as the spread of Salafi missionary effort has only increased the flames. These challenging social and political situations are the kind of setting into which the Lahore Ahmadiyya movement steps in the hopes that their message of peace and tolerance will ease the lives of local citizens who find themselves in the middle of such global conflicts.

Samina Malik, the Vice-President of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Movement, has described the movement's efforts in the region. In order to distribute copies of the Qur'an and Muhammad Ali's *The Religion of Islam*,²⁶ the group partnered with the Hilal Foundation, which "promotes a very liberal and tolerant Islam in Russia. In addition to the Mosque, it has built a Church and Synagogue on its campus in Moscow as a demonstration of Inter-faith good will...I was twice

invited by the President of Chechnya, Mr. Kadorov, to attend and speak at the International Islamic Conferences convened to promote peace and harmony in the region...The importance of promoting the correct, peaceful teachings of Islam cannot be emphasized enough as has been demonstrated by the fact that the two young men involved in the Boston Marathon bombing had been radicalized by militant propaganda in this very region.”²⁷ At an international conference in Chechnya, Samina Malik offered an address entitled “Islam and the Foundation of Inter-religious Peace,” in which she outlined “Islam’s liberal views of other religions,” which opens the way to peace and tolerance. Other themes in her talk included the following: Islam’s faith in all prophets as a foundation for inter-religious tolerance, the Qur’an’s insistence that there is to be no compulsion in religion, the limitations of the Qur’an regarding warfare, and the principle that there must be no punishment for apostasy.²⁸ This address serves as an example of the kind of teaching that accompanies the distribution of literature. The group is also active in Central Asia, particularly in Kyrgyzstan, where it has established friendly relations with local muftis and with ministries of religion.

Other troubled spots in the Muslim world where the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society is active include the southern Philippines, where there has been civil conflict and radicalization of marginalized Muslims, and Nigeria, where the northern districts of the country face both Muslim-Christian conflict as well as the presence of the extremist movement known as Boku Haram.

In all such trying circumstances, the goals of the movement are twofold: “One is to educate people of other faiths about the religion of Islam—as a spiritual and inspiring faith, distinguishable from the radical interpretations from extremist groups—so as to build bridges of understanding and commonality in multi-faith societies. And two, is to bring about reform in some Muslim societies where lack of proper understanding about Islam is giving rise to radical views and acts of violent extremism.”²⁹ In other words, the mission of Lahore Ahmadis has remained remarkably consistent with that of the first generation.

Reception of the Movement’s Work

Two particular efforts of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement can serve as settings in which to explore the reception of its work by non-Ahmadis. The specificities of their labors in Mali and Egypt share some similarities yet also have unique differences. Together they offer a portrait of contemporary expression of the vision of the movement’s Founder as well as how other Muslims respond to that work.

MALI

For centuries, Mali was a center for Islamic learning and libraries, especially in the city of Timbuktu. Historically, Islam in Mali was tolerant both of other religions and of diversity within Islam. The 2012 Pew Research Center report, “The World’s Muslims: Unity and Diversity,” noted that in Mali 71% of those interviewed acknowledged the legitimacy of multiple interpretations of Islamic teaching.³⁰ The religious landscape has been changing, however, and extremist elements have been increasing. In the same year of the Pew report, 2012, sharia law was imposed in northern districts of the country, resulting in persecution of non-Muslims, banning of music, dress requirements for women (previously most women did not wear veils), and harsh punishments, including stoning for alleged adulterers and cutting off of hands for thieves. Islamic militants also did not regard Sufi expressions of Islam as legitimate, and Mali had a significant history of Sufi piety and leaders.

In addition to outright militant groups, such as al-Qaeda, there has been an effort to promote the Wahhabi form of Islam that is dominant in Saudi Arabia. As elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, Saudi money supports Wahhabi missionaries to Mali, which leads to tensions with and suppression of expressions of Islam that had developed within Mali over the centuries. Wahhabism tolerates only a narrow definition of Islam, disrupting Malian culture yet also impressing some Muslims with its expensive mosques, apparently learned imams, and its claim to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Wahhabism subscribes to the division of the world into the house of Islam and, for the rest of the world, the house of war, with which Islam is in constant opposition.³¹

In Mali the Lahore Ahmadiyya found a natural partner with Sufis, particularly Sheikh Sufi Bilal Diallo, who is an avid distributor of Lahore Ahmadiyya publications. Sheikh Bilal promotes a peaceful and tolerant understanding of Islam.³² He has been described as “a charismatic, relatively young self-described Sufi religious specialist, who has managed to attract a great following by organizing large public gatherings for the birthday of the Prophet Mohamed, and through the publication of pamphlets and books dealing with Sufism and ritual practice.”³³ Sheikh Bilal is the leader of *la Communauté Malienne des Sufi*, and he has been critical of Saudi influence on Malian Muslims, particularly regarding intolerance toward Sufis. Sheikh Bilal has criticized the Muslim High Council of Mali for yielding to pressure from Saudis and therefore abandoning its formerly independent status as a voice of Muslims in Mali.

The teachings of Lahore Ahmadiyya strike a common chord with Sheikh Bilal’s understanding of Islam

as peaceful and tolerant. They provide independent affirmation of his own teachings, and they buttress his efforts to counter the extremist ideologies advanced by radical elements in those areas. Sheikh Bilal's followers, who reportedly number in the millions throughout West Africa, have recently built a warehouse and distribution center for all of West Africa, named the "Maulana Muhammad Ali Quran Distribution Center." They have schools in many West African countries and are using Lahore Ahmadiyya literature in their religious curriculum.³⁴

There are yet other attractions to a Sufi leader such as Sheikh Bilal. Followers who succeeded the Founder of the Lahore Ahmadiyya movement have noted that the language that the Founder employed to describe connection and intimacy with the Divine has its parallels with statements by Sufis such as Rumi or Attar, which some Muslims across the ages have found outlandish or offensive because they failed to realize that such language is only a metaphor.

The Founder ...tried to give a description of his inner experience of the complete surrender of his self before the Holy Prophet Muhammad...to convey this feeling of absorption in the personality of the Holy Prophet in different words, words which are a very defective medium of expression. He often made use of symbolic, metaphorical, suggestive and mystical terms to explain this central fact of spiritual experience. He called it a stage of annihilation in the Holy Prophet (*Fana fir-Rasul*).

...I become thee and thou become me,
I become the body and thou become the soul;

So that nobody should thereafter say we are apart.³⁵

Muhammad Ali then documents that the Sufi tradition commonly uses similar language. As evidence of this point, he quotes the great mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi:

With Thy Sweet soul, this soul of mine,
Hath mixed as Water doth with Wine.

Who can the Wine and Water part,
Or me and Thee when we combine?

Thou art become my greater self;
Small bounds no more can me confine.

Thou hast my being taken on,
And shall not I now take on Thine?

Muhammad Ali continues by noting that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad spoke of total surrender to, absorption in, and even annihilation (*fanā*) in the Prophet. *Fanā* is a traditional Sufi term for the experience of "passing away" or "dying before you die," in which one's ego

utterly dissolves, leaving nothing to remember except God alone. Ali draws attention to the fact that in 'Attar's great mystical poem, *The Conference of the Birds*, the seventh and final stage of the spiritual journey is the Valley of Annihilation of the Self.

The original intent of the passage in this quotation is to make the case that when Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was using the terms "shadow [*zill*] of the prophet" or "manifestation [*baruz*] of the prophet," he was doing so only metaphorically, rather than literally claiming the status of prophethood, which would be anathema in traditional Islam. It is however worthy of note that he is using language common to Sufis to explain the attainment of elevated spiritual states. He speaks in terms that other Sufis would understand. It is the suggestion of this essay that these aspirations would resonate with other Sufis, such as Sheikh Bilal, who would not only comprehend them but also share them.

Furthermore, as it was pointed out to me by a contemporary leader of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, traditional Sufi teachings can be quite complex, with many layers of the soul and states and stations of the spiritual life to be achieved. One attraction of the Lahore Ahmadiyya writings is that they do not rely upon such complicated schemes of inner reality. Thus their texts are "more easily digested" than many Sufi texts with their esoteric theosophy.³⁶ It might also be argued that the admirable simplicity of the Lahore Ahmadiyya writings also does not compete with or contradict the more elaborate structures of Sufi philosophy. They could therefore be accepted by a variety of Sufis who have differing schemata for the spiritual world. They can create common ground across the boundaries of Sufi schools of thought. The Lahore Ahmadiyya teachings also serve as a bridge between the Sufi tariqa and the orthodox sharia, upholding the orthodox rules and regulations of the sharia but also emphasizing the inward and spiritual significance of these beliefs and practices.

EGYPT

The role of Egypt is unique in the Muslim world. One the one hand, it is the home to Al-Azhar, the most distinguished center of learning in the Middle East, founded in the tenth century during the flourishing of the Fatimid dynasty. Although Islam has no counterpart to the central authority of the Roman Catholic papacy, approval of a text from Al-Azhar can be compared with an imprimatur from the Vatican: it certifies a writing's doctrinal propriety and carries weight throughout most of Sunni Islam. Al-Azhar bears the crown of orthodoxy.

On the other hand, Egypt is home to the Muslim Brotherhood and the seeds of revolution borne by works of Sayyid Qutb, who was executed in 1966 after convic-

tion of plotting to assassinate the President of Egypt, Gamal Abdul Nasser, whose government had previously sentenced him to hard labor in prison, where he suffered brutal torture. Qutb's writings, especially *Milestones* and his 30-volume commentary, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, became enormously influential in the Muslim world. Deeply discouraged by secularism and increasing westernization in the Islamic world, he embraced a radical revivalist interpretation of Islam. In the fourth chapter of *Milestones* dedicated to the topic of jihad, Qutb argued that Islam must use physical force to abolish tyranny and establish God's dominion by enforcement of sharia. Ultimately there are only two kinds of people besides Muslims: people at war with Islam, and *dhimmi*, or protected minorities who submissively and with humiliation pay the *jizya* tax.³⁷ Qutb's ideas profoundly influenced the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaida, and other extremist Islamist ideologies and organizations.

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement's labors in Egypt have taken them to Al-Azhar, where their writings have successfully been certified by the research department as doctrinally acceptable. This opens the door for their work in numerous lands and helps to overcome suspicions regarding the Islamic orthodoxy of the Lahore Ahmadiyya. The late Grand Imam, Sheikh Muhammad Syed Tantawi, was especially helpful to the organization, including writing a very positive foreword to the Arabic Translation of Muhammad Ali's *Religion of Islam*. He is reported to have utilized the book in his talks and lectures. One such instance was his reply to Pope Benedict XVI's Regensburg Lecture of 2006 that unfortunately resulted in controversy as a result of its citation of an anti-Muslim sentiment expressed by the 14th century Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaiologos. Tantawi's writing was entitled "A Peaceful Dialog with the Pope," in which he quoted extensively from Ali's *Religion of Islam* to demonstrate that Islam was not a violent religion.³⁸

The relationship was mutually beneficial. Many Muslims in Egypt are seeking an alternative to both the Brotherhood and modern secularism, and Lahore Ahmadi literature offers a third way. This third way is evidenced by a conference held in Cairo in January of 2016, entitled *The True Portrait of Holy Prophet Muhammad*. The event was supported and co-hosted by the World Organization of Sufi Orders. The presentation by Dr. Noman Malik, the Treasurer of the Lahore Ahmadiyyah Islamic Society, may serve as an example of the spirit of the gathering. His address was titled "A Guide for Universal Peace," which upheld the Prophet of Islam as a model for peace, justice, conflict resolution, and tolerance and kindness toward peaceful non-Muslims.³⁹ The support of the World Organization of

Sufi Orders suggests that, as in Mali, it is among the Sufis that the Lahore Ahmadi message found a ready home. The president of this organization, who was a presenter at the conference, is Sheikh Alaa Abul Azayem, who, as Head of the Azayemi Sufi Order and has a large following of about one million members. He has continued to be supportive of the Lahore Ahmadi literature and has assisted in its dissemination in the Middle East.⁴⁰

Conclusions

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement faces a historical context that is quite different from that of its Founder. Worldwide movements of Salafism and of militant extremism have placed Islam on a larger stage than a century ago, particularly with regard to its relationship to non-Muslims in the West. At the same time, Islam has, in the intervening hundred years, become in fact a religion of the West, as is indicated by the fact the movement is very active and highly productive in both Britain and the United States, among other places. Polemics against Muslims and against Islam are also now on a larger scale, and this is only enhanced by the ubiquity of the internet. The Movement still directs itself to a dual audience: it seeks to be a reforming movement within Islam, in order to promote a peaceful, tolerant, rational, modern, and spiritually inspiring vision of the religion. At the same time, the movement continues to hold forth this understanding of Islam in the face of attacks from non-Muslims who would consider all Islam to be extremist.

While the contemporary movement is clearly faithful to its founding message, there are new articulations to meet new occasions. In British India of the early twentieth century, notions of civil society were different. In Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's 1900 book *British Government and Jihad*, the British rule is praised as benevolent, and there was some truth to this: in the Punjab of Ahmad, the dominance of the British ended the relegation of Muslims to the status of untouchables. By the publication of Muhammad Ali's *Religion of Islam* in 1936, the tide was changing as India moved toward independence, and he could speak of democracy, announcing that Islam "is essentially the religion of democracy."⁴¹ Such statements suggest the nuance of the Lahore Ahmadi perspective on politics.

From one angle of vision, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement is apolitical. It does not endorse any political party or movement. It does not support any candidates or holders of political office. It utterly rejects violence and therefore extremist expressions of Islam, whether they are ostensibly efforts to reestablish the caliphate or to foment revolution. At the same time, contemporary Lahore Ahmadiyya can be described as having a vision

for a social order, although the reform of society requires the reform of individuals. This notion of civil society is clearly seen in Fazeel S. Khan's 2017 article, "ISIS'S Caliphate: A Violation of Scripture and Historical Precedent." There he wrote: "The true significance of Islamic Caliphate lies in 'spiritual affinity' to the Prophet Muhammad, not simple political governance over a Muslim community. It has less to do with geographical territory on earth, and more to do with garnering tranquility in hearts. A Caliph is to be less concerned with controlling societies and more concerned with cultivating souls. The true significance of a Caliphate is not dependent on an Islamic State, but rather on an Islamic State of Being."⁴² In the final analysis, from the perspective of the Lahore Ahmadiyya movement, peace among humankind grows from peace within, which in turn requires peace with God. Such a statement rings true not only with Lahore Ahmadis but also with the others who find their writings so compelling.

Endnotes

- 1 Mirza Mubarak Ahmad and Naseem Saifi. *So Said The Promised Messiah (Peace Be on Him)* (Rabwah, Pakistan: Vakalat-i-Tasif Tahrik-i-Jadid, 1983), p. 23.
- 2 Maulana Muhammad Ali makes this same connection, noting that the movement's Founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmad "showed that the domination of Islam would be effected in this age only by the beauty and attraction of its teachings and the sword would not be needed for its defence as it was not needed in the Makkan period of the Holy Prophet's life." Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Ahmadiyyah Movement*, transl. S. Muhammad Tufail (Lahore: Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Isha'at, Islam, 1973), p. 21.
- 3 Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons From the Life of Muhammad* (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 52.
- 4 Tariq Ramadan, *Footsteps*, p. 53.
- 5 Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *Message of Peace*, Columbus, OH: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore), 1993, pp. 1, 4. <https://www.muslim.org/bookspdf/mess-pc.htm>
- 6 Ahmad, *Message*, pp. 4, 5.
- 7 Ahmad, *Message*, p. 6.
- 8 Ahmad, *Message*, pp. 11-12.
- 9 Ahmad, *Message*, p. 13.
- 10 Ahmad, *Message*, p. 16. Earlier, he promoted an omnivorous diet, stating that a diet without meat inhibited the growth of courage, while refraining from vegetables lessened one's humility. Cf. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*, transl. Muhammad Zafrulla Khan (Original in Urdu, 1905; Islam International Publications: Tilford 2017), pp. 9-10.
- 11 Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Arabic Text with Translation and Commentary* (Columbus, Ohio: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Lahore, 2002), p. 1228
- 12 Ali, Qur'an, p. 416, see also 556.
- 13 Ali, Qur'an, p. 682. (Throughout this essay, any emphatic use of italics in quotations is in the original source.)
- 14 Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Religion of Islam: A Comprehensive Discussion of the Sources, Principles and Practices of Islam* (Columbus, Ohio: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Lahore, 1990), p. 405.
- 15 Ali, *Religion*, pp. 415-416.
- 16 Ahmad, *Jihad and the British Government*, pp. 14-15. See also these similar expressions: It is written in ahadith that, when the Promised Messiah will appear, then jihad with the sword and wars in the name of religion will end because the Promised Messiah will neither pick up the sword nor hold any other worldly weapon in his hands. On the contrary, his prayer will be his weapon and his resoluteness his sword. He will lay the foundations of peace and he will gather the lion and the lamb on the same bank and his era will be the time of peace, mildness and human sympathy. (p. 7)
I specially advise my group, who believe in me as the Promised Messiah, that they should always abstain from such corrupted practices. Since God has sent me as the Promised Messiah and has robed me in the garb of Jesus, son of Mary, therefore, I exhort you to avoid mischief and discharge the duty of sympathy towards mankind. Purify your hearts of rancour and prejudice such that by doing this you will become like angels. How soiled and polluted is that religion in which there is no sympathy for mankind and how fouled is that path which is full of thorns of self-ish prejudices. (p. 13)
Religion is for attaining a new life, which is Godly, and that life has never been attained, nor shall it ever be attained by anyone unless the Divine attributes are infused to humans. Be merciful to all for the sake of God so that Heaven is merciful to you. (p. 13)
- 17 Ahmad, *Jihad*, p. 26. See also on p. 27: "a person having received revelation from God is raised; one who has in him the ways and nature of Jesus, son of Mary, and who has brought the message of peace and reconciliation. Was a person who resembles Jesus not needed in the present era? Undoubtedly, he was needed when among the Muslims millions of such persons are found on the earth who habitually murder people of other communities under the excuse of *jihad*. In spite of living under a benevolent government, some of them can neither love them with a wholly pure heart, nor take true sympathy to the pinnacle of perfection nor be completely free of hypocrisy and double standards. Therefore, it was the call of time that someone comes in the colours of the Messiah. So I am the likeness-of-Messiah raised to resemble him spiritually, in habits and in the nature."
- 18 Ahmad, *Jihad*, p. 30.
- 19 This work is published by the Maulana Tufail Memorial Literary Trust, UK, 2002, and is available online at <http://aaiil.org/text/books/mali/promisedmessiah/secondcomingjesuspromisedmessiah.shtml>
- 20 See the notes to 75:9, 9:33, and 24:55 of the Qur'an, pp. 1155, 406, and 712, respectively.
- 21 Zahid Aziz, *Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement: History, Beliefs*,

- Aims and Work* (Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore Publications, U.K., 2008), pp. 46-47.
- 22 Zahid Aziz, *Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement*, p. 48.
- 23 *The Islamic Sunrise* 2010, Supplement 3, pp. 30-31. This issue also explains how honor killings, suicidal martyrdom, punishment for apostasy, and shunning of friendships with non-Muslims are un-Islamic.
- 24 The pilgrimage is obligatory only if one can afford to make it. Since there is a disproportional amount of the world's poverty in Muslim-majority lands, most Muslims are unable to do *hajj*. Additionally, there are over a billion Muslims in the world, and only about two million per year are permitted into the sacred grounds. By sheer mathematics alone, most Muslims cannot observe this pillar of Islam. The Pakistani prohibition of Ahmadis is, nevertheless, offensive by design.
- 25 Fazeel Khan, the Secretary of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society, in a private communication, related some instances of death threats, from other Muslim groups, in the course of their work, in the Middle East, in Asia, and in Europe.
- 26 To be precise, in this instance, the Qur'an translation was in Russian, while *The Religion of Islam* was in Arabic translation. The Russian translation of the latter was in process but delayed. Students in the Islamic Studies classes for which it was intended could make use of the Arabic edition.
- 27 *The Light and Islamic Review*, July-Sept 2014, p. 14. The reference is to the Boston Marathon bombings of April 2013 by the brothers of Chechen descent, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev and Tamerlan Tsarnaev. More information on the Hilal Foundation can be found at their website: <http://maginur.ru/about/>.
- 28 Samina Malik, "Islam and the Foundation for Inter-religious Peace," *The Light and Islamic Review*, Oct.-Dec. 2007, pp. 7-9.
- 29 Samina Malik, "Report on Publication, Translation and Distribution Work," *The Light and Islamic Review*, July-Sept., 2017, p. 14.
- 30 Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life, "The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity," 2012. <https://www.pewforum.org/2012/08/09/the-worlds-muslims-unity-and-diversity-executive-summary/>
- 31 For more on the intra-Muslim conflicts in Mali, see Alex Thurston, "Towards an 'Islamic Republic of Mali?'" *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, vol.37:2 (Summer 2013): 45-66.
- 32 See for example, his video, "La Paix et la Tolérance," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUrV7-mCXAo>.
- 33 Marieke Kruijs, *Islamic Pathways: Islamic youth associations and Muslim identity formation in Bamako, Mali*. Master Thesis in African Studies, Leiden University, 2010, p. 48. <http://www.ascleiden.nl/Pdf/thesis-kruijs.pdf>
- See also Benjamin F. Soares, "Saint and Sufi in Contemporary Mali," in Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell, eds., *Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 76-91.
- 34 Noman Malik, "Maulana Muhammad Ali French Holy Quran Distribution Center Opens in Bamako, Mali," *Basharaat-E-Ahmadiyya*, June 2019, pp. 3-4, cf. also p. 17.
- 35 The material in this section is drawn from Muhammad Ali, *Prophethood in Islam* (English transl. S. Muhammad Tufail (Maulana Tufail Memorial Literary Trust UK, 1995), pp. 609-611.
- 36 Fazeel S. Khan, in private communication with the author.
- 37 These points are drawn from Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1993). The fact that this book was printed by this publisher reveals Qutb's acceptability by mainstream American Muslims prior to September 11, 2001. The book's change of fortune is indicated by its presence, at the time of the writing of this essay, on Islamophobic websites such as islamistwatch.org.
- 38 Samina Malik, "Report on Publication, Translation and Distribution Work," *The Light and Islamic Review* July-Sept. 2014, p. 17; Mohamed Sayed Tantawi, *This Is Islam: A Quiet Dialogue with His Holiness, The Pope of the Vatican* Al Azhar, n.d., p. 12. Also available at <http://www.alsiraj.net/English/misc/dialogue/html/page03.html>
- 39 USA Jamaat, Board of Directors, "Continuing the Great Revival Initiative Report on Conference in Cairo, Egypt, on the True Portrait of Holy Prophet Muhammad," *Basharaat-E-Ahmadiyya: An International News Magazine of Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam (Lahore) USA*, February 2016, pp. 14-15.
- 40 Samina Malik, "Report on Publication, Translation and Distribution Work," *The Light and Islamic Review*, July-Sept., 2017, p. 14
- 41 Ali, *Religion*, p. 544. Similarly, in his 1917 translation and commentary on the Qur'an, states that in the early caliphate Islam "laid the basis of government by parliaments...[yet] it is strange indeed that Government by parliament is now looked upon by Europeans as an institution which is quite foreign to Islam and unsuited for the Muslim people." (Ali, *Qur'an*, p. 951)
- 42 Fazeel S. Khan, "ISIS'S Caliphate: A Violation of Scripture and Historical Precedent," *The Light and Islamic Review*, Jan.-March 2017, p. 4. An entire issue of *The Light and Islamic Review* (July – September 2016) is devoted to the theme of the caliphate. ■

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.

(See page 2 for contact information)

Acta Comparanda

SUBSIDIA VII

International Conference Ahmadiyya in scholarly perspective October 24 & 25, 2019

Faculty for Comparative Study of Religions and Humanism (FVG) &
European Observatory of Religion and Secularism

Program & Speakers :

Brahim Laytouss, Welcome

Chris Vonck, Introduction: My (Holy) Search for a Qur'ân in the 50's

Ken Avonts, Sumera Tariq and Fazeel S. Khan, Two Branches in Ahmadiyya

*Heiko Wenzel, Is Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat an Intolerant Version of Islam?
A Dialogue with Hiltrud Schröter's Book on the Jamaat*

Sumera Tariq, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad's Political Thought and Pakistan's Making

Muhammed Haron, South Africa's Ahmadiyya Community: A Religious Minority with a Double-Identity

Idrees Ahmad, The History of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

*Michael Birkel, Continuity and Change : Historical Roots and Contemporary Expression of
the Ideals of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement of the United States*

John H. Hanson, The Ahmadiyya in Ghana: Aspirational Muslims in a Global Community

Iftikhar Ayaz, History of the Ahmadiyya Community. A Theological Perspective

*Ataul Wasih Tariq and Vasco Fronzoni, Blasphemy, Ahmadiyya Theology and Positive Legislation
in the Case of Morocco and Pakistan*

*Fazeel S. Khan, An Assessment of the Claim of Prophethood Attributed to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad,
the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement*

Maria d'Arienzo, Sovereignty and Power in Ahmadiyya

Willy Fautré, The Ahmadis in the World, a Human Rights Perspective

Thierry Valle, The Case of the Ahmadis Refugees in Thailand and Malaysia

Iftikhar Ayaz, Conclusion of the Conference

WHO IS WHO



Faculty for Comparative Study of Religions and Humanism
B-2610 Wilrijk-Antwerpen – Belgium