

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

# ***The Light***

## **AND**

# **ISLAMIC REVIEW**

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

**July – September 2017**

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

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**احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### About ourselves

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

|                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
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| <b>Guyana</b>    | <b>Philippines</b>  |

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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 Maulana Muhammad Ali and the Legacy of his Quran Translation/Commentary

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

*[In August 2017, in conjunction with its annual convention in Columbus, Ohio, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society held a symposium commemorating the centenary anniversary of the first publication of Maulana Muhammad Ali's English Translation and Commentary of the Holy Quran (1917-2017). The symposium was titled "Reviving the True Spirit of the Islamic Faith" and was attended by clergy from various faith traditions, academics and members of the interfaith community. This article represents the introductory presentation delivered by the Editor, in which information about Maulana Muhammad Ali is relayed and material about his Quran Translation and Commentary is conveyed. Video recordings of all presentations from the symposium are available at: [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IVBGtc\\_2QLc0avxXOU-IwGq4Osq\\_xo.](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IVBGtc_2QLc0avxXOU-IwGq4Osq_xo.)]*

I would like to share with you some information about Maulana Muhammad Ali and introduce you to his English Translation and Commentary of the Quran, the publication we are commemorating today. I could tell you that MMAli was born in 1874 in the Punjab region of India. And that he was a brilliant student, achieving high distinction in his academic studies. I could go on to tell you that he obtained a Bachelors Degree in Mathematics, then pursued a Masters Degree in English (while working as a Professor of Mathematics), and went on to obtain a Law Degree. But none of that would really provide insight into the person who left the great legacy of this English Translation and Commentary of the Quran. To truly understand who the man was that produced this world-renowned, transformative work, one must appreciate the connection he had with the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

Maulana Muhammad Ali joined the Ahmadiyya Movement in 1897 after visiting Qadian (a small, remote village in India) and spending time there with the Founder of the Movement. He stated about this visit: "a new world opened before my eyes." The pious personality of the Founder of the Movement and his devotion to the cause of spiritual upliftment of humanity made a firm and lasting impression on Maulana Muhammad Ali. He was completing his academic studies at the time, but continued to correspond by mail with the Founder of the Movement and began translating his writings from Urdu into English.

In the year 1900, after graduating with his law degree, MMAli made all necessary preparations for starting his law practice in Gurdaspur. But he decided to visit the Founder of the Movement first. And during this stay, he determined that he would abandon his plans of a worldly (and lucrative) career and instead devote his life to the cause of religion by remaining in Qadian with the Founder of the Movement. Maulana Muhammad Ali writes about this visit and the ultimate decision that he made; he states:

"... if Almighty God had not guided me towards this work, I would, like my fellow-students, have become at best a successful lawyer or judge. But the man who directed me to this work, then set me on this path, and guided me correctly is the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian. At a time when I had gone into a worldly path, he not only pulled me out of the mire of this world but also created within me a light of faith that has stayed with me throughout this struggle. ... In exactly the year 1900, when I was on my way to Gurdaspur to start my law practice, with all arrangements completed, the premises rented, and my belongings and books moved there, my Guide took me by the hand and said: 'You have other work to do, I want to start an English periodical for Islam in the West, you will edit it.' What great fortune that, on hearing this voice, I did not hesitate for a moment as to whether I should start this work or the other work for which I had prepared myself."

It was there, in the rural and little-known village of Qadian, under the tutelage of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, that Maulana Muhammad Ali learned the beautiful truths of religion that would form the foundation of his literary accomplishments and would revolutionize the presentation of Islam to the West, attracting and inspiring people the world over.

A couple of years later, the Founder of the Movement appointed him as Editor of the journal he wanted started. The journal was titled *Review of Religions*, and it was one of the first Islamic journals in the English language. Through this periodical, Maulana Muhammad Ali presented the pure, pristine, spiritual teachings of Islam to a modern world that had primarily only been exposed to an unpleasant image of it. The Founder of the Movement continued to give Maulana Muhammad Ali increasing responsibility in terms of outreach and administrative duties. And in 1906, he appointed him as Secretary of the "Anjuman", the governing body of the Movement.

The Founder of the Movement passed away in the year 1908. And he had expressed another desire, and

that was to prepare an English translation and commentary of the Quran so that an authoritative presentation of the true spiritual principles contained in this scripture may be made available to the West. He explained: “I cannot refrain from stating clearly that this is my work and that no one else can do it so well as I or he who is a branch of mine and thus included in me.” A year after the Founder’s death, Maulana Muhammad Ali commenced translating the Quran into English and preparing an English commentary to fulfill this objective expressed by the Founder of the Movement.

It took him seven long years, from 1909 to 1916. And this work entailed exhaustive original research of meanings of words and verses. And it comprised deciphering the links between preceding and succeeding texts to show the inter-connectedness from one section to the next, thereby demonstrating how the Quran contains a continuous theme running through it. It first appeared in print in 1917 (100 years ago) in England and instantly became a standard in the world of Islamic scholarship. It was a pioneer venture breaking altogether new ground, and was the first English translation of the Quran *by a Muslim* to become widely accessible in the West.

And what was so special about this work is that it addressed every criticism made against Islam and, in a purely academic fashion, corrected the many misunderstood points about the faith that detracted from its universal message, thereby reviving the true spirit of the faith. It became, and continues to be today, an indispensable literary work for any serious student of the religion of Islam. In the realm of Western scholarship, the impact of this Translation and Commentary was noticeable in the changed outlook on Islam and the changed tone of literature about Islam. An early indication of this change is found in the writings of H.G. Wells. In 1920, shortly after the publication of MMAli’s English Translation and Commentary, H.G. Wells’ book *The Outline of History* appeared. It reproduced therein an entire section of a chapter from this Translation of the Quran, and described it as an example of the Quran’s “majestic utterances from the recent orthodox translation by the Maulvi Muhammad Ali.” And the pattern set by Maulana Muhammad Ali was followed by subsequent translations of the Quran. Most of them relied heavily on his work in terms of the text itself, but the ideas and supporting material in the commentary, and even the formatting and presentation were also noticeably replicated.

Maulana Muhammad Ali’s Translation and Commentary received rave reviews from all corners, at home in India and abroad in England. One review called it a “literary masterpiece”. Another described it as having “surpassed all other English translations”. Even

recently, we have Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, probably the most well-known and highly regarded American Muslim theologian, who stated that Maulana Muhammad Ali’s translation “is the best in my estimation”. But, what I think is most telling, is what subsequent translators of the Quran into English themselves testified about this pioneering work.

Maulana Majid Daryabadi, a recognized leader of orthodox Muslim opinion and translator of the Quran into English wrote:

“To deny the excellence of Maulvi Muhammad Ali’s translation, [and] the influence it has exercised ... would be to deny the light of the sun.”

Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar, another translator of the Quran into English and author of a popular biography of Prophet Muhammad, wrote:

“The English translation of the Holy Quran [by Maulana Muhammad Ali] is not the only book he has written, but it is the one by which he will perhaps become an immortal amongst those who have written about the Holy Quran ... Maulvi Muhammad Ali has corrected the mistakes of the previous translators in scores of passages ... There is no other translation or commentary of the Holy Quran in the English language to compete with Maulvi Muhammad Ali’s masterpiece.”

Marmaduke Pickthall, a well-known English convert to Islam who also produced an English translation of the Quran that became very widespread, wrote in reference to Maulana Muhammad Ali:

“Probably no man living has done longer or more valuable service for the cause of Islamic revival.”

Interpreting the word of God requires scholarship no doubt, but it also requires much more. It requires the gift of inner purity. Maulana Muhammad Ali wielded a scholar’s pen with a saint’s hands, and that is where lay the secret of this translation and commentary becoming a real spiritual force and a beacon of light for sincere students of the Quran. His biographers note that in public he was cheerful and pleasant, witty yet humble, and of good nature. In seclusion, he would fall before God in prayer. And if anyone woke early in the morning before dawn, they may hear his heart-felt cries and supplications to God. It is written that it was as if he was not part of this world at those times, but was elsewhere, having lost himself in the Divine Being and expressing before God the pain in his heart and the concern in his soul for humanity.

When in his 70s, towards the end of his life, 33 years having passed since the publication of his translation and commentary, Maulana Muhammad Ali determined

he should revise his work. He had authored many other prominent literary works during this interval, and believed the translation and commentary could benefit from his increased knowledge and insight over these years. He commenced this revision work in 1946 and completed it in 1951, alongside periods of poor health. This taxing labor in his old age had a heavy toll on his health, and compelled him to attend to the final proof-reading in his sick-bed. His biographers record that on arrival of the proofs from England, Maulana Muhammad Ali would get his head raised in his bed and, with his hands quivering, correct the proofs and note his final touches. The final proofs were corrected on October 8, 1951, and five days later Maulana Muhammad Ali breathed his last.

As is the case with all great spiritual luminaries, the departed soul leaves behind sacred gifts that continue to benefit humanity long after they are gone. The English Translation and Commentary of the Quran by Maulana Muhammad Ali is one such gift. And today we will be commemorating this great work, by discussing:

- Its historical impact on promoting the spiritual basis of Islam;
- Its current utility in furthering a universal message of peace; and
- Its efficacy in continuing to influence and shape modern Islamic thought.

Which brings me to the end of my Introduction, I thank you for your attention. ■

## **Maulana Muhammad Ali's Quran Translation and Commentary – Distinguishing Features**

**By Dr. Noman Malik**

*[In August 2017, in conjunction with its annual convention in Columbus, Ohio, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society held a symposium commemorating the centenary anniversary of the first publication of Maulana Muhammad Ali's English Translation and Commentary of the Holy Quran (1917-2017). The symposium was titled "Reviving the True Spirit of the Islamic Faith" and was attended by clergy from various faith traditions, academics and members of the interfaith community. This article represents the keynote presentation delivered by Dr. Noman Malik, in which he discusses some of the distinguishing features of Maulana Muhammad Ali's Quran Translation and Commentary.]*

*Video recordings of all presentations from the symposium are available at: [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IVBGtc\\_2QLc0avxXOU-IwGq4Osq\\_xo.](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IVBGtc_2QLc0avxXOU-IwGq4Osq_xo.)]*

### **Introduction**

I will be discussing today the distinguishing features of Maulana Muhammad Ali's Quran Translation and Commentary.

Maulana Muhammad's translation of the Holy Quran was the first English translation by a Muslim to be widely available in the West. Only three English translations were available at that time:

- Translation by Alexander Ross, a Chaplain in the Court of Charles I, in 1649;
- Two-volume translation by George Sale in 1734; and
- Translation by John Rodwell in 1861.

This was not a time of interfaith concordance and amity. The rapid scientific advances in the West coupled with the power of the industrial revolution had enabled the European nations to overpower the Muslim countries, and Islam was viewed as a violent and primitive faith with Muslims as an inferior people. Men of learning, no matter how scholarly, could not help but be influenced by the times they were living in, and the Quran translators were no exception. For example, George Sale in his Introduction calls the Quran "an obvious forgery". Hence, the need for Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation at that time cannot be overestimated.

I cannot emphasize enough that Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation and commentary is not simply his own personal opinion. Rather, as he himself states in his revised second edition, its conclusions are carefully arrived at after taking into consideration the use of the words or terms under review in other places in the Quran, authentic Hadith reports, recognized lexicons of classic Arabic language previous well recognized commentaries in Arabic, established facts and rational thought. On this basis he rejects many of the stories which are present in earlier Arabic commentaries which are not present in the reliable reports of the Holy Prophet Muhammad or do not have strong historical backing.

Wherever he differs with prevailing interpretations, he advances sound arguments and references for his conclusions. So his English translation not only corrects the misconceptions non-Muslims may have about the Holy Quran, but it also corrects the misperceptions of some Muslims themselves about various key issues which had over the years crept in their understanding of the Quran and Islam. By doing so, his work laid the basis for a revival of the true spirit of the Islamic faith.

### The Quran's Call for Critical Thinking and Rational Thought

The first distinguishing feature I would like to talk about is how Maulana Muhammad Ali highlights the Quran's call for critical thinking and rational thought. Far from the common view that Islam is a ritualistic faith that requires blind obedience or submission to a belief system, the Quran actually condemns blind following and advocates critical thinking and rational thought. For instance, it states:

Do you not then reflect? (6:50)

Do you not understand? (2:76)

Have you no sense? (2:44)

There are signs in this for a people who reflect. (13:3)

There are signs in this for a people who understand. (16:12)

Maulana Muhammad Ali emphasizes the fact that the Arabic word for "reason" is *'aql*, which means "intelligence, understanding, intellect, mind, reason or knowledge", and its verb form means "he looked into, considered, examined or studied the thing repeatedly until he knew it." (See Lane's Lexicon.) Maulana Muhammad Ali also stresses that reading, writing and the acquisition of knowledge is the first commandment of God: "Read in the name of thy Lord Who created . . . Read and thy Lord is most High, Who taught to write with the pen, Taught man what he knew not" (96:1-5). As a result, Maulana Muhammad Ali argues that although the Holy Qur'an recognizes revelation as a source of knowledge higher than reason, at the same time it admits that the truth of the principles established by revelation may be judged by reason. Hence, the common theme throughout is that it repeatedly appeals to critical thought and denounces those who do not use this reasoning faculty.

Similarly, Maulana Muhammad Ali underscores the principle of interpretation given in the Quran itself. The Quran states:

"He it is Who has revealed the Book to thee; some of its verses are decisive they are the basis of the Book and others are allegorical." (3:7)

The word translated as "allegorical" is *mutashabih*, from the root word *sibh*, meaning "likeness or resemblance". As a result, statements that are allegorical or could have different meanings should be interpreted so they are in accordance with and do not contradict verses which have a decisive or plain meaning. Unlike many previous interpretations and commentaries of the Holy Quran, Maulana Muhammad Ali uses this as a guiding

principle throughout his work. Using this methodology, Maulana Muhammad Ali was able to unearth many spiritual insights into the lessons contained in this holy scripture that had been neglected in previous interpretations.

An illustration of how Maulana Muhammad Ali employs these principles is his explanations of congruity between lessons from the Quran and modern scientific thought. Maulana Muhammad Ali's work rebuts the supposition that religion is outdated and contrary to science. Rather, it advances the relevance of religion and the divine source of the Quran by demonstrating the rational thought contained in the Quran even when compared with knowledge in this modern technological age.

#### Example of interpreting implication of "Rabb"

For example, the very first attribute of God mentioned in the Quran is that of "Rabb". This is normally translated simply as "Lord". However, it combines two senses: 1) that of fostering, bringing up or nourishing, and 2) that of regulating, completing and accomplishing (LL., TA.). Hence, *Rabb* signifies "the fostering of a thing in such a manner as to make it attain one condition after another until it reaches its goal of perfection." This significance is made clearer in another very early revelation, which states:

"Glorify the name of thy Lord (Rabb), the Most High! Who creates, then makes complete, And Who measures, then guides" (87: 1-3)

Commenting on this verse Maulana Muhammad Ali explains:

"The full meaning of *Rabb* is explained here: He creates things and brings them to perfection; He makes things according to a measure and shows them the ways whereby they may attain to perfection. **The idea of evolution** is fully developed in the first two actions, the creation and the completion, so that everything created by God must attain to its destined completion."

Accordingly, through understanding the key elements of the word "Rabb" and applying its significance, through the faculty of reason, to known phenomena, Maulana Muhammad Ali is able to demonstrate how the Quran is consistent with knowledge and understanding accepted by scientific inquiry.

#### Creation of Universe

Similarly, Maulana Muhammad Ali addresses the congruity of statements in the Quran with proven scientific facts while discussing verses describing the creation of the universe. The Quran states:

"Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it was a vapour, so He said to it and to the earth:

Come both, willingly or unwillingly. They both said: We come willingly.” (41:11)

In his commentary, Maulana Muhammad Ali explains verse 41:11 by highlighting principles of cosmogony along with its broader spiritual lesson. He writes:

“Note that heaven is here plainly spoken of as being originally *dukhan, smoke, vapour* or *gaseous matter*. The command to creation to come willingly or unwillingly is reference to the Divine laws working in nature. Everything created, whether in the heavens or the earth, is subject to law. The existence of one law throughout the universe is clear evidence of the existence of One God, the Maker of that law.”

By highlighting that one stage of the universe’s creation was comprised of it being a gaseous material from which the starry creation originated, Maulana Muhammad Ali ties in scientific facts with the spiritual lesson of all creation being created and guided by strict divine laws. He thereby makes the point relatable and digestible for a reader of modern times.

#### **Gestational stages**

Likewise, Maulana Muhammad Ali addresses the Quranic statements of stages of fetal development with established science of embryology. The Quran states:

“And certainly We created man of an extract of clay, then We made him a small life-germ in a firm resting-place, then We made the life-germ a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then we made bones in the lump of flesh, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We cause it to grow into another creation...” (23:12-14)

In his commentary, Maulana Muhammad Ali explains:

“The several stages in the growth of the human child, as given here, and unknown then, are quite in accordance with scientific investigation. It should be borne in mind that the word *fa*, meaning *then*, as used in *then We clothe the bones ...* does not always imply order. This is clear from the context, which states that there is first a lump of flesh, and the nucleus of the bones is generated in this flesh.”

Again, by highlighting the consistency of the various stages of fetal development as related in the Quran with the science of embryology, Maulana Muhammad Ali supports the argument for the divine origin of the Quran with reasoning on a level understood in modern times.

#### **Purpose of Religion: Spiritual Development, not Mere Belief/Dogma**

Another distinguishing feature of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s Translation and Commentary is how he advances the Quran’s perspective on the purpose of religion being to facilitate spiritual development, rather than being based on mere belief or dogma or following rituals. In his commentary, Maulana Muhammad Ali develops this perspective by defining the relationship of the soul of man to God as presented in the Quran. As the Quran states:

“So when I (God) have made him (man) complete and breathed into him of My spirit ...” (15:29)

As Maulana Muhammad Ali explains, this means that all the divine attributes of God – such as Mercy, Beneficence, Kindness, Truthfulness, Justice, Intelligence, etc. – are within each one of us. This implication also being that all human beings are spiritually equal and should be treated with dignity.

And the analogy that is provided in the Quran compares the “soul” to a “seed”. Just as the seed has certain attributes inherent within it with the potential to grow into a garden, so too does the soul have divine attributes within it that if cultivated properly can grow into the spiritual garden of heaven. As the Holy Quran states:

“And the soul and its perfection! –  
So He reveals to it its way of evil and its way of good;  
He is indeed successful who causes it to grow,  
And he indeed fails who buries it.” (91:7)

Spiritual development, therefore, means developing these divine attributes within oneself, and the only way to develop them is by practicing them. Hence, to develop the attributes of kindness and truthfulness, one should be kind and truthful in one’s dealings with others. In essence, one is to try to be more god-like in his or her actions.

And why is this important? It is significant because it not only clarifies the object of religion, it lays the foundation for the understanding that “salvation” is not limited to any particular group of people. It establishes that salvation is dependent on individual spiritual development. As the Quran states:

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

And, as a corollary, Maulana Muhammad Ali points out that heaven and hell are in fact spiritual conditions that one experiences, not physical places. As the Quran states:

“A parable of the garden which is promised to those who keep their duty: therein flow rivers; its fruits are perpetual and its plenty” (13:35)

“It is the Fire kindled by Allah, which rises above the hearts” (104:6, 7).

Accordingly, as the descriptions of the hereafter are identified as a “parable”, they are not a physical portrayal as such but rather spiritual blessings explained using material representations. He further explains, based on the authority of the Quran, how heaven is meant for continued spiritual progress, while hell is only for reform and therefore not everlasting.

Understanding the Quranic verses in this context reforms the understanding of the object of religion – it is not simply to try to get into a place by believing in certain dogma or following certain rituals, but rather to better one’s spiritual condition by doing good to others and becoming more god-like in one’s essence.

#### Universality of Revelation and Unity of Mankind

Another distinguishing feature of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s Quran Translation and Commentary is that he underscores the principle that God is the *Rabb* (i.e. Nourisher unto perfection) of **all** mankind. Just as God provides physical / material blessings to all (the sun, water, vegetation, animals, etc.), so too does he provide his spiritual blessings to all. And these spiritual blessings come in the form of guidance to mankind through prophets and messengers and revealed scriptures. As the Quran states:

“And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them” (35:24)

“And for every nation there is a Messenger”

“And (We sent) messengers We have mentioned to thee before and messengers We have not mentioned to thee” (4:164)

Prophet Muhammad is also reported to have said that there were 124,000 messengers of God sent to humanity before him.

Now, the Quran specifically mentions Israelite prophets. For example, it states:

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

Muslims accordingly believe in them. But, in his

commentary, Maulana Muhammad Ali utilizes the broad principles of universality of revelation to show the Quran’s position that **all** religions, their founders, scriptures and teachings have a common divine origin and a common core message. As a result, holy personages like Krishna of India or Buddha may have been prophets of God and must deserve our reverence and respect. And it is this principle of appreciation and respect for holy personages, their revealed scriptures and their followers, if widely adopted, can truly establish equality, peace and unity among mankind.

#### Concept of War and the Meaning of “Jihad”

The last distinguishing feature I will address is how Maulana Muhammad Ali interpreted to concept of permissible war in Islam and, relatedly, the significance of the term “jihad”. As we have seen in recent times, fundamentalist views by Muslims about the concept of war and the meaning of “jihad” have caused much chaos in the world. And MMALI’s Translation and Commentary utterly destroys these extremist views.

Maulana Muhammad Ali clarifies the meaning of these concepts on the basis of decisive principles contained in the Quran and the life example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. He stresses that war according to Islam is only “just” if it is defensive, if it is for the object of upholding rights (in particular religious freedom and liberty for all) and if it is a last resort after all attempts at resolution through non-violent means have been exhausted. As the Quran states:

“Permission to fight is given to those upon whom war is made, because they have been wronged – and God is well able to help them. Those who have been expelled from their homes unjustly, only for saying, ‘Allah is our Lord’. (22:39,40)

“And if God had not allowed one group of people to repel another, then there would have been pulled down cloisters and synagogues and churches and mosques, in which God’s name is much remembered.” (22:39,40)

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

“And if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it, and trust in God. Surely He is the Hearer, the Knower. And if they intend to deceive thee, then surely God is sufficient for thee. (8:61,62)

These decisive verses, he points out, precludes any form of aggressive war. And he stresses how these verses only give the “permission” to fight back under certain limited circumstances, and no commandment is given anywhere to fight others.

And, as Muslims are required to follow the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who is termed the “best exemplar” in the Holy Quran, Maulana Muhammad Ali uses the example of Prophet Muhammad’s life as support for this understanding of permissible war in Islam. Maulana Muhammad Ali highlighted how all of the battles that Prophet Muhammad engaged in were defensive and only as a last resort to save his small persecuted community from extermination.

And relatedly, he explained the true significance of the term “jihad” as used in the Quran. The general impression until recently was that the term “jihad” is synonymous with “war”. An example of this misunderstanding is well illustrated in the older edition of the prestigious Encyclopedia of Islam where the entry for “jihad” says “*see war*”.

In his commentary, Maulana Muhammad Ali clears this misconception by showing that the meaning of “jihad” in the great Arabic Lexicons is “*a struggle against any object of disapprobation to rectify a situation.*” He further shows that the word “jihad” appears frequently in the Meccan verses, a period of 13 years, which comprises the major part of the prophethood of Muhammad when there was no fighting at all. In this situation it is used in its primary meaning of a spiritual struggle and fortitude in the face of persecution, and the same use continues in the period at Medina (10 years).

He further provided supporting evidence from authoritative traditions. For instance, he highlights that when a group of Muslim soldiers came to the Holy Prophet [from a battle], he said: “Welcome, you have come from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad.” When asked: “What is the greater jihad?” He said: “The striving of a servant against his low desires.”

He also clarified that “jihad” in the sense of war is used in the Medina verses when the Muslims had fled Mecca for the safety of their lives. And the Meccans would not leave them alone but would attack them again and again to force them back to the pagan religion. It is then the Muslims were given the permission to fight for their lives in self-defence.

Thus, Maulana Muhammad Ali shows throughout his commentary that war in the Holy Quran is allowed only in self-defence and as a last resort and the view that Muslims are required to fight people of other faiths is entirely baseless. And he clarifies the true significance of the term “jihad”, meaning a spiritual struggle against one’s low desires, not a term that is synonymous with war. These vital points of understanding the Quran is very much needed today.

## Conclusion

There are many distinguishing features of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s Translation and Commentary that one could highlight. One could point out his conclusive arguments against the doctrine of abrogation (in which some people believe certain verses cancel others), or against the erroneous views that the Quran requires death as a punishment for apostacy or blasphemy, or in support of gender equality, etc. But the one consistent theme of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s Translation and Commentary is that it makes the Holy Quran relevant to modern times. And it not only addresses all of the misunderstandings about the Quran and the religion of Islam, but it brings the reader back to the principle object of religion, thereby reviving the true spirit of the faith.

May God Almighty help us in our understanding and in our application of these lessons. Ameen. ■

## Impact in the Academic Realm

By Prof. Fatima Rahman

*[In August 2017, in conjunction with its annual convention in Columbus, Ohio, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society held a symposium commemorating the centenary anniversary of the first publication of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s English Translation and Commentary of the Holy Quran (1917-2017). The symposium was titled “Reviving the True Spirit of the Islamic Faith” and was attended by clergy from various faith traditions, academics and members of the interfaith community. This article represents the address delivered by Prof. Fatima Rahman, in which she discusses the impact of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s literary works in university classrooms. Video recordings of all presentations from the symposium are available at: [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4IIVBGtc\\_2QLc0avxXOU-IwGq4Osq\\_xo](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4IIVBGtc_2QLc0avxXOU-IwGq4Osq_xo).]*

I am so honored to be here today. As you all are well aware, the topic of our symposium is reviving the true spirit of the Islamic faith, namely restoring the practice of the faith to its authentic roots. Roots that advocate for religious tolerance and coexistence, peaceful worship and doing good to those around us. This of course is the core objective of The Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society, an organization that many of us, including myself, are blessed to be members of.

In achieving our organization’s mission, one of our primary tools are our literary works, such as books, articles, and Quranic commentary that present the philoso-

phy and tenets of our faith. These literary works have been written by great scholars of the past, beginning with our organization's founder Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. This great tradition has been continued by contemporary writers. In doing so, our scholarship shows how our faith based on its scripture and practice of the Prophet Muhammad wholeheartedly rejects intolerance, bigotry, and violence. Today my focus is on the works of one of these great scholars — Maulana Muhammad Ali and the usage of his texts in the college classroom

For those of you who have picked up and read any of Maulana Muhammad Ali's works, what really stands out is that the content of his books as well as his commentary of the Quran, are very much factual and evidence-based. This objectivity is one of the reasons why his books have been a success as teaching tools in my classes.

It should be no surprise that his books are a popular choice for Islamic studies courses across university and college campuses across the United States. I am not an Islamic studies professor, but a professor of political science, and his books have been equally useful. This in and of itself speaks to the breadth, comprehensiveness, and relevance of his literary works, namely that they can be used not only for humanities courses but also for social science courses.

Most of the courses I teach deal with the intersection between Islam and politics both in historical and contemporary contexts. As a result, I need texts that discuss some core issues relating to the Islamic concept of the state, the Islamic concept of a political leader, the Islamic understanding of the legal system and punishments, and concepts related to warfare.

As I have had to select books for my courses, I have had a lot to choose from. There is so much that has been written on Islam and politics both by eastern and western scholars. All in all, I have spent months reviewing possible texts, but in the end the works of Maulana Muhammad Ali truly stood out.

The two main books that I selected which I have used throughout almost all of my courses for the past six years are *The Religion of Islam* and *The Early Caliphate*, as well as sections of the English translation of Maulana Muhammad Ali's Quranic commentary.

Now, in selecting Maulana Muhammad Ali's literature, the three features that stood out in his literary works compared to all the other books I was considering were the following.

First, his research is based on credible and authentic sources. The caliber of research is outstanding, and like I mentioned he does a very good job of guarding against

bias, by presenting evidence, reasoning, and logic.

Second, the content of his books is comprehensive and complete, but at the same time it is easy to understand. Consequently, he does a great job of making complex topics accessible.

Third, his works are incredibly relevant today. They deal with some of the most salient political topics. The foresight that he had to write about issues that would be pressing today is incredible.

To illustrate, let me give a few examples of topics that students are concerned about and Maulana Muhammad Ali's discussion of them.

First, a matter of great concern is ISIS or the so-called Islamic State. In *The Early Caliphate*, Maulana Muhammad Ali presents a beautiful illustration of the earliest Islamic states right after the passing of Prophet Muhammad. These Islamic states were under the leadership of Abu Bakr, Omar, Usman, and Ali. He presents the open and inclusive way in which these leaders served members of their communities. He gives specific examples of how religious minorities had some of the top official governmental postings in the caliphs' administrations. This is quite a contrast to the horror that terrorist groups are trying to create today.

A second subject matter of interest and concern is jihad. In his book, the *Religion of Islam*, Maulana Muhammad Ali presents a clear and well evidenced explanation of jihad. He beautifully explains how there are two types of jihad. The greater or the spiritual jihad which means bettering oneself and trying to rid oneself of bad and sinful habits. And the lesser or defensive jihad which allows the use of arms for self-defense, but only if a set of conditions are met. First, the Muslim community is being attacked because of its faith. Second, the Muslim community is facing an existential threat. Third, the use of arms is a last resort, and all other means of survival like diplomacy and negotiations have been exhausted.

Most students come into the class thinking that jihad means holy war, and are very surprised to learn that according to the Quran and the practices of the Prophet Muhammad the religious term has a completely different meaning and has been exploited and redefined by ill-intentioned and self-interested political actors who are looking for power and promoting evil ideologies. What I find really compelling is the way in which Maulana Muhammad Ali traces how the meaning has changed over the course of history. This allows students to make sense of how today jihad has become synonymous with holy war even though there is no scriptural or early Islamic evidence for this.

So much of my understanding of Islam has come

from the scholars associated with this great Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society— both scholars from the past like Maulana Muhammad Ali, and contemporary scholars. For that, I feel incredibly blessed. Thank you everyone for your attentive listening and focus. May God's best blessings shower each of you. ■

## The Hebrew Translation – Personal Reflections

By Dr. Shlomo Alon

*[In August 2017, in conjunction with its annual convention in Columbus, Ohio, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society held a symposium commemorating the centenary anniversary of the first publication of Maulana Muhammad Ali's English Translation and Commentary of the Holy Quran (1917-2017). The symposium was titled "Reviving the True Spirit of the Islamic Faith" and was attended by clergy from various faith traditions, academics and members of the interfaith community. This article represents the presentation delivered by Dr. Shlomo Alon from Israel, in which he discusses his personal experiences in translating Maulana Muhammad Ali's Quran Translation and Commentary into Hebrew. Video recordings of all presentations from the symposium are available at: [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4IIVBGtc\\_2QLc0avvXOU-IwGq4Osq\\_xo](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4IIVBGtc_2QLc0avvXOU-IwGq4Osq_xo).]*

I was so honored and privileged when I was asked by Mrs. Samina Malik, from the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society, to prepare a Hebrew translation of The Holy Quran English Translation and Commentary by Maulana Muhammad Ali, following the new 2002 edition. I know that Maulana Muhammad Ali passed away about 66 years ago, when I was only 7 years old, when I knew nothing about the sign of G-od that will bring me now to undertake this holy task. Thank you, Samina and Norman.

I was head of the Department of Arabic Studies for the Israel Ministry of Education for 25 years, from 1986 to 2011. But my love story with the Arabic language began when I was 14 years old, and it has continued for 59 years. Through the years, I completed my Masters degree about the linguistic concepts of Abu Nasr al-Farabi and my PhD degree about the classical Arabic dictionaries. I served 44 years as an educator, at the high school, college and university level. During the years I composed bilingual dictionaries and textbooks. I learned much about Islamic culture and came to admire Islam as a religion of peace, moral and human values. I served many years in various interfaith organizations. And I stand here before you today to speak about my work on translating Maulana's Translation and

Commentary of the Holy Quran into Hebrew.

The Holy Quran was translated into Hebrew a few times before, from the 17th century and on. Some unpublished manuscripts are kept in the British Library at Oxford, London, and the Library of Congress in Washington, U.S.A. There are four published translations into Hebrew. These were done from 1875 to 2016. One was published in Leipzig, Germany and the other three were published in Tel Aviv, Israel. In my work, I translate the Holy Quran to Modern Hebrew, and present a full translation of the commentary by Maulana Muhammad Ali from English to Hebrew. Maulana Muhammad Ali's work is extraordinary, and the commentary is unique work, nothing to be compared to.

I was deeply impressed and touched by the way Maulana refers in his translation and footnotes to the various appearances of my name – Shlomo-Solomon-Suleiman – in The Holy Quran. Solomon is mentioned in the Holy Quran in seven chapters (suras), five from Mekka (6, 21, 27, 34 and 38) and two from Madinah (2 and 4). Maulana deals with the following attributes and life stories of Solomon:

- Solomon was a prophet,
- He did not worship idols,
- reviews birds,
- How he understood the speech of birds,
- He was granted abundance,
- He prays for a spiritual kingdom,
- How the wind was made subservient to him,
- The story of certain hosts of Solomon,
- How he had control over jinn and devils,
- How fabrications were made about him,
- The story of Solomon and the Naml,
- The story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba,
- How Solomon shows the Queen the error of sun-worship by way of the metaphor of a glass palace,
- The story of killing the horses,
- The fleet of Solomon,
- The weak rule of the successor of Solomon and the death of Solomon.

Yes, I'm grateful to Maulana for the perfect way he translated the verses concerning Solomon in the Holy Quran and his faithful footnotes concerning this chain of history: Shlomo-Solomon-Sulaiman. As a Jewish scholar, who shares with you, my friends, the belief in a Book revealed from G-od (the Bible, the Old Testament), a belief in the Unity of G-od, the prophecy and the strong unshakeable belief of monotheism, I find

myself attached to you and the wonderful piece of art Maulana gave us through his translation and footnotes.

I would like to now direct attention now to the uniqueness of Maulana's translation of the Holy Quran and to the uniqueness of his commentary in particular. One illustration is from chapter (sura) 29 (the Spider, al'Ankabut), verse 45. This verse shows how inclusive the Holy Quran is for all nations and people. This particular verse also shows how accurate Maulana's translation is and how consistent it is with the broad universal themes of the Quran. His commentary of this verse also shows how deep and profound his insights are, based on the best authorities, with respect to and knowledge of the Bible as well. Maulana translated Verse 45 from Chapter 29 as follows:

*“Recite that which has been revealed to thee of the Book and keep up prayer. Surely prayer keeps one away from indecency and evil; and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest force. And Allah knows what you do”.*

The verse is included in the 5th section of the Sura, the section which discusses the how the Holy Quran is a Purifier. In a long footnote (26 lines), Maulana explains in length the role of prayer to G-od in Islam, the meaning of purity and devotion, the knowledge of the Divine Being, and the deep meaning of the Book – the Holy Quran. The footnote is a masterpiece of understanding of the Holy Quran and its permanent relevance to human life. The footnote states:

“This verse invites the followers of all religions to accept the Quran on account of its purifying effect upon life, as the previous scriptures had ceased to effect deliverance from the bondage of sin, which is the real object of revelation. The verse also lays down the right principle for getting rid of the bondage of sin in the words “the remembrance of Allah is the greatest” which means: the most powerful and effective restraint upon sin. It is a living belief in the Divine power, knowledge, and goodness that restrains man from a walking in the ways of His displeasure. A sure and certain knowledge that every evil action leads to an evil consequence’ that there is a Supreme Being, Who knows what is hid from human eyes and Whose moral law is effective where the moral force of society fails, that He is the source of all goodness and it is through goodness that man can have communion with Him, are the only effective restraints upon evil.

“It should also be noted that the recitation of the Book, the keeping up of prayer, and the remembrance of Allah are really identical; for the Quran

is recited in prayers, and the Quran is the best means of the remembrance of Allah. Every line of it brings before the mind of the reader the goodness, power, and knowledge of the Divine Being, while there is no other Book which fulfils this requirement. The Quran is neither a book of law, though it contains the principles of the laws necessary for the guidance of man, nor a book of sacred history though it contains the necessary sacred history, but it is pre-eminently a Book that manifests the glory, greatness, grandeur, goodness, love, purity, power, and knowledge of the Supreme Being.

“While as generally understood, by the remembrance of Allah is meant His glorification and praise in prayer. ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas, the Holy Prophet companion is reported to have said that by the *dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah is here meant Allah’s remembrance of man or His raising him to a place of eminence (Tafsir al-Tabari). Thus the significance would be that through prayer to G-od, not only is man freed from the bondage of sin, but (which is greater than this) he is raised to a place of higher eminence”.

This is one brilliant comprehensive footnote from hundreds prepared by Maulana to focus on the light this Holy Quran will give people from all nations to guide them to their perfect life. It is only a glimpse of an extensive message to humanity presented by Maulana through the translation of the Holy Quran verses and its explanations through his footnotes.

I would humbly suggest to you all, what I did by myself – to read Maulana’s “The Early Caliphate”, where he offered a picture of the thirty years of ideal Islamic rule. This is the period of leadership by the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s companions, the period of the *Rightly Directed Caliphate – Khilafah Rashidah*, the period of Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman and ‘Ali. One day I’ll work on translating this important book to modern Hebrew, maybe after translating Maulana’s book “Muhammad the Prophet”, which is equally brilliant.

Another key aspect of Maulana’s Holy Quran Translation and Commentary can be witnessed through his introductory notes to the various chapters. To give just one example, I relay here some of his words to the Introduction to Chapter 27, al-Naml:

“The Quran is the word of Allah which the Holy Prophet received from on High, just as Moses received a call at Mount Sinai, and the enemies of the former would be dealt with, even as those of the latter”.

He continues:

“The Prophet’s triumph was not to be marked by the utter destruction of his enemies...but by the ultimate spiritual resurrection of those who seemed to be quite deaf, dumb, and dead.”

The spiritual development of human beings and a better understanding of the deep essence of true belief are the key elements of Maulana’s interpretation of the Holy Quran. I’m glad to know that through the translation of this great work into Hebrew, and many other languages, we might expand the exposition of Maulana’s labour so as to bring better understanding between believers in G-od in our region, the Middle East, and around the globe.

Thank you all for listening and honoring me by your presence. ■

## Report on Publication, Translation and Distribution Work

By Samina Malik

*[In August 2017, in conjunction with its annual convention in Columbus, Ohio, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society held a symposium commemorating the centenary anniversary of the first publication of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s English Translation and Commentary of the Holy Quran (1917-2017). The symposium was titled “Reviving the True Spirit of the Islamic Faith” and was attended by clergy from various faith traditions, academics and members of the interfaith community. This article represents the presentation by Mrs. Samina Malik, in which she provides a Report on the practical work being done to publish Maulana Muhammad Ali’s Quran Translation and Commentary, have it translated into a host of other languages, and distributed around the world. Video recordings of all presentations from the symposium are available at: [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL411VBGtc\\_2QLc0avxXOU-IwGq4Osq\\_xo](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL411VBGtc_2QLc0avxXOU-IwGq4Osq_xo).]*

### Introduction

I will be presenting to you today a report on the work being done by the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society – which is the U.S. branch of the International Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement – to continue the legacy of revival through Maulana Muhammad Ali’s Quran Translation and Commentary.

Our work in this regard is multi-faceted. It entails translation projects, coordinating printing in various parts of the world, and developing strategies for distribu-

tion on the ground. And our work comprises two approaches. The first is to educate **people of other faiths** about the religion of Islam – as a spiritual and inspiring faith, far removed from the radical interpretations from extremist groups – so as to build bridges of understanding and commonality among people. The second 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.

### In the West

In the western hemisphere, our work primarily consists of making the Maulana Muhammad Ali Quran Translation and Commentary (and some of our other major publications) accessible to anyone wanting to learn about the religion of Islam. This is done by making these publications available through various pipelines, including major bookstores, university classrooms, libraries and even prisons. In 1987, I initiated a systematic plan on behalf of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society to accomplish this goal. By the Grace of God, we have seen much success.

### America

Over the past 30 years, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society’s publication work has had a strong presence in shaping modern Islamic thought in America. We are a top publisher of Islamic literature in the country. Our publications are recognized as not only containing scholarly and authentic information, but also meeting the highest of publication standards. As a result, all major retailers carry our publications, and they have become very accessible to the general public. Many universities use our publications as text books in religious studies and theology classes.

With the generous donations from our members, we were also able to distribute thousands of copies of our Quran Translation for free or at very low cost. Our distribution work helps bridge the informational divide, and provides opportunities for improved understanding in a religiously diverse society. It is a resource utilized to counter extremist ideologies that normally consume discussions about Islam in the Media.

### United Kingdom

With our success in America, I turned attention to the UK. I was able to engage a leading Distribution Company, which now supplies our Holy Quran to all major book distributors servicing bookstores throughout the UK. The Distribution Company was very pleased with the results in the UK, and is now expanding the distribution to other parts of Europe. Our Quran Translation is now becoming as widely available in Europe as it has been in America for the past three decades.

### Translations of the Holy Quran

Our work internationally primarily entails having Maulana Muhamamd Ali's Translation and Commentary of the Quran translated into major languages of the world. In 1987, the late Dr. Saeed Ahmad, the Past-President of the Worldwide Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, directed the USA Branch to initiate an extensive project to translate the Holy Quran into other languages of the world, and I was placed in charge of this project. Dr. Saeed Ahmad suggested that we begin with translations into German, French and Russian.

The process of producing a translated work of a holy scripture is quite demanding, and requires meticulous attention to detail. It entails selection of a translator who is both an expert in the local language and skillful in the English language. The translator's work then goes through periodic reviews, which sometimes leads to difficult choices to be made when differences of opinion arise. When the translation itself is finalized, work is then done on typesetting. A final independent proof-reading is then performed, to ensure accuracy and preclude errors. Lastly, printing is attended to – the type of paper, the design, the location, etc., which is an art in and of itself.

By the Grace of Almighty God, in response to Dr. Saeed Ahmad's instructions, I was able to find very qualified translators for the German, French and Russian translations and bring those projects to completion. These projects took several years each. And they paved the way for expanding to other languages as well. In addition to German, French and Russian, translations in Turkish, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, Chinese and the Commentary in Arabic have all been completed, are published and are being distributed to local populations.

We are also in the final stages of checking and typesetting for translations in Portuguese, Albanian and Tagalog. And, we are in the middle of having translations completed in Bisayan, Sinhalese, Afrikan, Korean, Japanese and Hebrew.

### Free Distribution

We also work to get our Holy Qurans out into the hands of local populations for free.

### Russian and Central Asia

From 1998 to 2006, we sent 70,000 copies of our Russian Holy Quran Translation and Commentary to Russia for free distribution. For the first three shipments, I personally went to Russia to have the Qurans cleared through Customs. It was a very difficult task dealing with the bureaucratic Customs Department but, thanks to Almighty God, I managed to have the shipments cleared each time. On one occasion, the customs

official said that he would release the Holy Quran shipment only on one condition. On hearing that, I thought he was going to ask for a bribe, which I was not willing to give. To my surprise, when I asked him what the condition was, he smiled and replied that he wanted one personal copy of the Holy Quran.

For Russian distribution project, we partnered with the Hilal Foundation, a Muslim organization that promotes a very liberal and tolerant understanding of Islam in Russia. Our Holy Quran has been well-received by other Muslim organizations in Russia as well, and I have been invited to speak about the objectives and work of our organization in mosques in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

One region in Russia where our literature is greatly needed is Chechnya. I have taken 400 copies with me to Chechnya when I attended a conference there. Our Russian translation of the Holy Quran has great potential to spread in the Central Asian Republics. I have traveled to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan to arrange for the distribution in those countries as well.

### Nigeria and Ghana

Similarly, we have engaged in free distribution campaigns in Nigeria and Ghana. In Nigeria, we partnered with our sister organization, the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Nigeria, and have sent over 25,000 copies of Maulana Muhammad Ali's Holy Quran Translation and Commentary. The moving force behind the local collaboration efforts is Haji Luqman Adebyi, the President of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Nigeria. And we are so grateful for his presence with us here today.

### Philippines

We have also engaged in a free distribution campaign in the Philippines. In 2007, I traveled to the Philippines to see if there was an opportunity to establish the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society's presence there. There is a great need for a peaceful message of Islam in the country as the conflict between some Muslim tribes in the Southern part of the country and the government has on occasion turned violent. And, some marginalized Muslims have turned to radical groups to further their political goals.

We have also registered a local branch in the country and established a Center in Cagayan de Oro. We have been blessed with local individuals, who are very loyal to our cause, joining the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and providing valuable help to us in our work. Our Center serves as a mosque and a library, and from our Center we carry on many charitable activities including feeding the poor.

We have also started translations of Maulana Muhammad Ali's Quran Translation and Commentary into various local dialects.

### Academic and Learning Centers

In addition to getting our Holy Quran into the hands of local populations, we also work towards shaping modern Islamic thought by making our Holy Quran available at major centers of learning throughout the world.

In **Germany**, we sent 3,000 copies of the German Translation of Maulana Muhammad Ali's Quran Translation and Commentary for free to Professors of Religion and Theology, and university and public libraries throughout the country.

We did the same, on a smaller scale, in **Australia**, with the assistance of our dear brother, Sadar-ud-Din Sahukhan, who is a Senior Prosecutor and interfaith leader in the country. And we are so happy with his attendance here today.

Similarly, we sent several thousand copies of the Holy Quran to **South Africa**. Many of these have been placed in libraries throughout the country through the hard work of Mr. Ebrahim Muhammad, President of the South Africa branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement.

Recently, in **India**, we published and donated 6,000 copies of the Holy Quran and commentary for free to libraries, university professors, journalists, and others in influential positions throughout the country. In the Preface to the Special Edition of the English translation of the Quran published specifically for India, we emphasized the fact that *Mahatma Gandhi* used to particularly read the English translation of the Holy Quran by Maulana Muhammad Ali, and no other, along with readings from the Vedas and the Bible, every morning. His closest followers, such as the past President of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan, also followed this practice. It is our prayer that our Quran translation and commentary will once again contribute to influencing a new generation of great souls like Mahatma Gandhi.

This year, we will be attending to free distribution our Holy Quran translations to academic and learning centers in **France, Italy and Turkey**.

### Middle East

And, as you heard this afternoon, we are so excited with Prof. Hussein's translation of Maulana Muhammad Ali's Quran Commentary into Arabic, and Dr. Shlomo's translation of Maulana Muhammad Ali's Translation and Commentary into Hebrew. It is our earnest prayer that this work will contribute to facilitating better understanding and relations between people in the region.

### Holy Quran E-Book and App

Finally, keeping up with the times, we also have Maulana Muhammad Ali's Quran Translation and Commentary in digital format available for e-book readers. We also just recently developed an App for computers, tablets and phones with full search and research capabilities. The App is available for free download everywhere in the world.

### Conclusion

With that, I conclude this brief summary of our work to continue the great legacy of revival left by our dear Maulana Muhammad Ali. Three days before Maulana Muhammad Ali passed away, he called his brother-in-law, Mr. Nasir Ahmad Faruqi, to whisper in his ear. He was very weak and could not speak well. He said: "our work is to distribute the Holy Quran to all corners of the world, and the Quran will then do its own work". We pray our humble efforts will positively impact the world as so desired by Maulana Muhammad Ali.

Thank you very much. ■

## Messages of Support

### From Congressman Andre Carson and Minister Ishmael Muhammad

*[In August 2017, in conjunction with its annual convention in Columbus, Ohio, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society held a symposium commemorating the centenary anniversary of the first publication of Maulana Muhammad Ali's English Translation and Commentary of the Holy Quran (1917-2017). The symposium was titled "Reviving the True Spirit of the Islamic Faith" and was attended by clergy from various faith traditions, academics and members of the interfaith community. This article is a transcript of messages of support from Congressman Andre Carson and Minister Ishmael Muhammad. Video recordings of all presentations from the symposium are available at: [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IIVBGtc\\_2QLc0avxXOU-IwGq4Osq\\_xo](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IIVBGtc_2QLc0avxXOU-IwGq4Osq_xo).]*

### Congressman Andre Carson

*As-Salaam-Alaikum.* It is a great honor and pleasure addressing you tonight. I want to thank Brother Fazeel, Dr. & Mrs. Malik and Ahmad for their constant work for the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society. Also, I want to thank everyone who has taken the time to come out tonight and support the important work of the Lahore community.

Amidst these challenging times, the Lahore community leaves me inspired. Today's symposium is just

another example of that great work. For over one hundred years, you have confronted the struggles of Islam based on your own wonderful interpretation and have shown the value of its peaceful origins, the example of tolerance and acceptance and the fight against falsehood and violent extremism. Though these difficult conversations have left us stunned, you have been an important part of building the work, the path toward a better future.

I've always deeply respected this wonderful community and the teachings of Maulana Muhammad Ali. His writings have influenced me personally and have allowed me to really grow in the faith. His treatise *The Religion of Islam* was greatly influential on me as a very young man. And quite frankly, it taught me the way I should approach the religion in an understanding way, a compassionate way, a sympathetic way, and approach it with kindness. And I think historically Islam has unified, it hasn't divided. It's brought together races and ethnicities and different societies that otherwise would have not exchanged. These peaceful interpretations of Islam are critically important today. And his work continues to remind us that the true nature of Islam is peace.

So I want to thank you all. Sorry I couldn't be there, but God bless and *As-Salaam-Alaikum*.

### Minister Ishmael Muhammad

*Bismillah ar-rahman ar-rahim, la ilaha illallah Muhammad ur rasulullah. As-Salaam-Alaikum.* My dear and beloved family, brothers and sisters, it is indeed a great honor and privilege to be here this weekend representing the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam to express our deep gratitude to the great masterful work of Maulana Muhammad Ali in the translation of the Quran. For without this translation, we particularly in the African-American community would not have known our true religion. The Nation of Islam owes a debt of gratitude to this wonderful human being that Allah found. As it is written in the Quran, Allah knows best where to place his message. And even though we that speak English are grateful to Maulana Muhammad Ali's work, the Muslim world owes a debt of gratitude to Maulana Muhammad Ali as well. Why? Because in his translation and commentary, Maulana Muhammad Ali saw the Muslim world had already deviated from the Prophet. He wanted to give to Islam and to the Muslims, the true meaning and spirit of the Quran.

You should also know that every time Minister Farrakhan had dinner at his home and he invited ministers and bishops and those of the Christian faith, at the end of the dinner he would give them a complimentary copy of the Holy Quran, the translation and commentary of Maulana Muhammad Ali.

We are so grateful Sister Samina and Dr. Noman for the work that you are doing to preserve his legacy and to preserve the purity of that translation. And the reason why the Honorable Maulana Muhammad preferred the Maulana Muhammad Ali translation of the Quran is because he lifts the name "Allah", while other English translators say "God". He wanted us to be familiar with the proper name of God out of the original language and the Arabic tongue.

So my dear beloved family and brothers, we pray that Allah will continue to bless this movement. And that Allah will continue to spread his message of truth through the work that you are doing in various languages so that the people can come into the knowledge and the understanding of this great revelation given to humanity from Allah. We thank Allah for Maulana Muhammad Ali and we thank his descendants, his offspring and those of you who are committed to his work. May Allah protect you. May He guide you. We are going to take that book to our people because our people are walking in darkness and they need the light of truth that the Holy Quran brings. We will always be in the foremost of propagating Islam in America among the suffering masses of the American people, black, brown, red, yellow and white. All need the Holy Quran, specifically the English translation and commentary of Maulana Muhammad Ali.

Thank you for allowing me these few words as I greet you in peace. *As-Salaam-Alaikum*. ■

## The Holy Quran – A Great Spiritual Force

By Dr. Mohammed Ahmad

[In August 2017, in conjunction with its annual convention in Columbus, Ohio, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society held a symposium commemorating the centenary anniversary of the first publication of Maulana Muhammad Ali's English Translation and Commentary of the Holy Quran (1917-2017). The symposium was titled "Reviving the True Spirit of the Islamic Faith" and was attended by clergy from various faith traditions, academics and members of the interfaith community. This article represents the concluding presentation delivered by Dr. Mohammed Ahmad, in which he discusses various aspects of the Holy Quran as being a great spiritual force. Video recordings of all presentations from the symposium are available at: [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IVBGtc\\_2QLc0avxXOU-IwGq4Osq\\_xo](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL41IVBGtc_2QLc0avxXOU-IwGq4Osq_xo).]

### A Provider of Spiritual Sustenance

The Holy Qur'ān claims to be a great spiritual force, the object of which is to bring humanity to perfection. It opens with the words:

*“Praise be to Allāh, the Nourisher of the worlds to perfection (1:1).*

And it ends with the words:

*“Say: I seek refuge with the Nourisher of mankind to perfection” (114:1).*

And this is the theme throughout the Holy Book.

It calls itself *al-Rūh* (42:52) or *the Spirit which gives life to humanity*, and time and again compares itself to water which gives life to a dead earth. This giving of life to the dead earth is a constant theme of the Qur'ān and it is full of repeated assurances that the dead earth will be raised to spiritual life.

It calls itself as *Shifā'* or *Healing* (10:57) to show that it heals all the spiritual diseases of humanity.

It calls itself *al-Dhikr* or *a source of eminence to mankind* (15:9).

It calls itself *al-Nūr* or *the Light* (7:157) which will ultimately dispel all darkness from the surface of the earth.

It calls itself *al-Haqq* or *the Truth* (17:81) which will ultimately take hold of the minds of men, and before which falsehood will vanish.

It calls itself *al-Hudā* or *the Guidance* (72:13) which will make men ultimately attain the goal of life.

It goes further and lays claim to the fact that its spiritual lessons can win the hearts of people. This claim was proven true during the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Within a span of 23 years, the Holy Quran wrought an unparalleled spiritual transformation that caused a change in the lives of an entire nation.

### The Spiritual Effect of the Holy Quran

The Qur'ān found the Arabs worshippers of idols, stones, trees, heaps of sand, and yet, within less than a quarter of a century, the worship of the One God ruled the whole country, idolatry being wiped out from one end to the other. It swept away all superstitions and gave in their place a religion based on reason and rationality. The Arab who prided himself in his ignorance had become the lover of knowledge, drinking deep at every fountain of learning to which he could get access. This was the direct effect of the teachings of the Qur'ān, which not only appealed to reason, but declared man's thirst for knowledge to be insatiable when it directed the Prophet himself to pray: *“O my Lord, increase me in knowledge”* (20:114).

Not only had the Qur'ān swept away the deep vices and immorality of the Arabs, it had also inspired them with a burning desire for the best and noblest deeds in the service of humanity. The immoral actions of burying alive the female child, the marrying of one's own step-mother, and deprivation of rights of the weak had given place to equal respect for the offspring, whether male or female, to equal rights of the most vulnerable members of society, and to placing the highest value on doing good to others. Drunkenness, to which Arabia had been addicted from time immemorial, disappeared so entirely that the very goblets and the vessels which were used for drinking and keeping wine could no more be found. And, greatest of all, from an Arabia, the various elements of which were so constantly at war with one another that the whole country was about to perish, being “on the brink of a pit of fire” as the Qur'ān so beautifully and so tersely puts it — from an Arabia full of these jarring and warring elements – the Qur'ān welded together a nation, a united nation full of life and vigor.

The Qur'ān effected a transformation of humanity from the lowest depths of degradation to the highest pinnacle of civilization within an incredibly short time, where centuries of reformation work had proved fruitless. To its unparalleled success, testimony is borne of this fact by even the harshest of critics. For example, William Muir states in his book *Life of Mahomet*:

*“From time beyond memory, Mecca and the whole Peninsula had been steeped in spiritual torpor ... Thirteen years before the Hejira, Mecca lay lifeless in this debased state. What a change had these thirteen years now produced! ... it was not until they heard the spirit-stirring strains of the Arabian Prophet that they too awoke from their slumber, and sprang suddenly into a new and earnest life”*

(William Muir, *Life of Mahomet*, ch. vii).

### Additional Unique Characteristics

The marvelous effect produced by the Holy Qur'ān on the minds of those who first came into contact with it, the unparalleled revolution brought about in the world, the uplift of not one but many nations from the depth of degradation to the height of civilization is, however, not the only characteristic which establishes its claim to uniqueness. It possesses two other characteristics equally unique — the wealth of ideas and the beauty of style. These two combined with the effect it produced are the three things which raise the Qur'ān to a universally accepted height of eminence.

In fact, the effect produced by the Holy Qur'ān is not a mystery. It was merely the greatness and reasonableness of the ideas clothed in the best of forms that appealed to the heart of man and, taking deep root in it,

became the driving power to the great goal of life. A blaze of light was cast on all the great questions which had puzzled man, and the way was thus cleared for onward march and progress.

Hence, one of the names by which the Holy Book speaks of itself is *al-Burhān*, or the “Clear Argument”, showing that “argument” was the weapon which it used to conquer the heart of man. And, as it appealed to reason and not to sentiment, its conquests were so far-reaching and permanent that it swept away all mysteries and dispelled all darkness. It is also called *al-Bayān*, or the “Explanation”, indicating that it had removed all obscurities in spiritual matters. It claimed not only to have stated all religious truths needed for the moral and spiritual advancement of man, but also to have dealt with all objections to its truth. As it states in the Quran:

“And they cannot bring thee a question, but We have brought thee the truth and the best explanation” (25:33).

These grand life-giving ideas contained in the Quran were clothed in an equally impressive outer garb. The *style* and *diction* of the Qur’ān have been universally praised. In the introduction to his translation of the Holy Qur’ān, George Sale writes:

“The Koran is universally allowed to be written with the utmost elegance and purity of language in the dialect of the tribe of the Koreish, the most noble and polite of all the Arabians, but with some mixture, though very rare, of other dialects. It is confessedly the standard of the Arabic tongue.”

What establishes the Qur’ān’s claim to uniqueness even in the outward form, apart from its subject and the effect produced, is the permanent hold that it has kept on the Arabic language itself. It remains forever the standard by which the beauty of style and diction may be judged in Arabic literature. One will be hard pressed to find any other book in the world credited with even the achievement of keeping alive a language for thirteen centuries. The Qur’ān, however, has done this, attaining to the eminence of being the standard of eloquence for so long, and of retaining that position while the nation speaking it emerged from oblivion to set the world on a trajectory to modern civilization.

### Continued Effect

In the past century, we have seen glimpses of a similar reformation. This awakening was again a result of the Holy Quran, but presented in the form of the English Translation and Commentary by Maulana Muhammad Ali in the West. Whether it was in the heart of European society in England or in the spread of the teachings of Islam in the African American community here at home, Maulana Muhammad Ali’s English Translation and Commentary of the Holy Quran was a source of spiritu-

al revival for many, as was discussed in the presentations earlier today.

The principles and interpretations contained in this work are needed in many other parts of the world. That is why we engage in the work of translation and distribution of this Translation and Commentary in all regions of the globe to continue this great legacy of spiritual revival, as was just reported in the presentation by Samina Malik.

I would like to end by reading to you a passage from one of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s sermons. In this passage he explains how to nurture the love of the Holy Quran in the heart of the believer. He states:

“There is no benefit in reciting the Holy Quran hurriedly. It should be recited slowly with attention and careful thought given to its meaning. What is remiss from the recitation of the Holy Quran these days is precisely the absence of this mode of recitation (*turteel*)...When a person recites the Holy Quran repeatedly it begins to have its effect upon him. Those who are not in the habit of reading it frequently cannot get much benefit from it, nor can their perusal be useful. The Holy Quran has an effect upon the heart of every individual no matter what the person’s condition is. When one recites it in a state of difficulty or comfort, it definitely affects the heart. The problem is people do not try to comprehend its meaning or concentrate upon it. They recite it in their prayers merely as a burden to be fulfilled. Real pleasure cannot be drawn from it without understanding and thoughtful perusal ... That is why Allah, the Most High, states: ‘And recite the Qur’ān in a leisurely manner (*turteela*)’.”

I thank you for your attendance today. And I ask that you please keep us and our work in your prayers. ■

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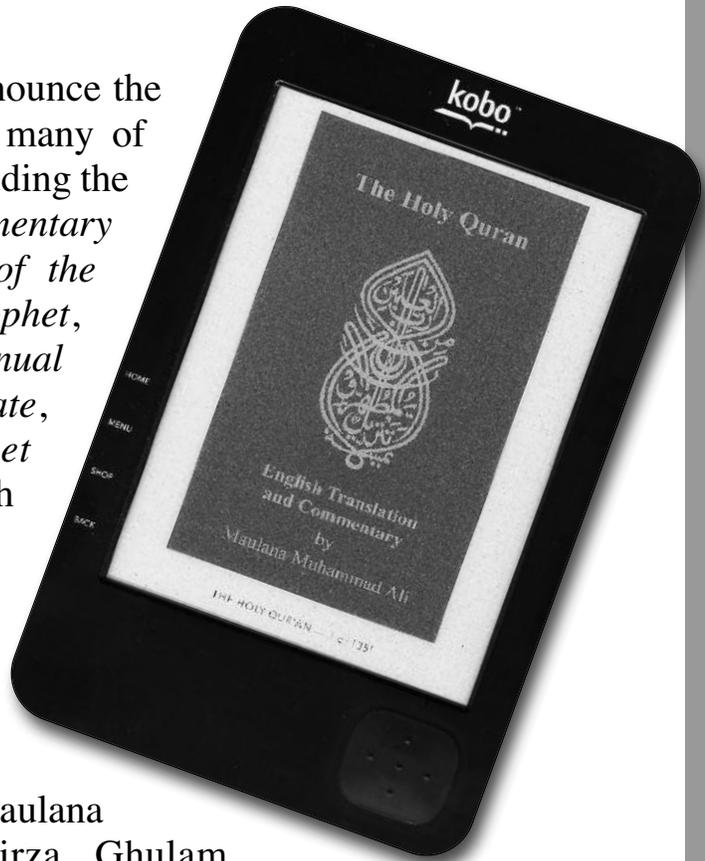
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