

“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 2019**

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. 96

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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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**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:

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

#### Achievements:

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

#### History:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## The Life and Times of a British Journal of Islam

By Amanda Lanzillo

*[This article, originally published on March 18, 2019 in the Himal Southasian, provides an objective historical account of how The Islamic Review “would go on to become one of the most prominent journals of Islamic thought in the West in the 20th century.” The author – Amanda Lanzillo, a PhD candidate in Asian History at Indiana University in Bloomington, USA – reports that the Islamic Review was the mouthpiece for the historic Woking Muslim Mission, which was linked to the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, and that its publication reach expanded across Western Europe, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia and the Americas. Today, the author explains, its archives “enable us to examine the centrality of Ahmadi Muslims within the history of Islam in the West in the 20th century.” The Islamic Review continues today in the form of the combined current publication, The Light and Islamic Review, and its editorial staff is honored to maintain a publication with such a significant and distinguished past. The original publication of this article is available with historic photographs at himalmag.com/islamic-review-ahmadiyya-amanda-lanzillo-2019/.]*

The Westerner is disgusted with his own Church, and wants something reasonable and liveable to substitute for it. Muslim tenets appeal and go to the very heart of every sensible man here.

– The Islamic Review, January 1926

In the autumn of 1912, a Punjabi Muslim lawyer from Lahore arrived in London, having travelled from his hometown with the dual purpose of pleading a civil case in England and establishing a Muslim missionary presence there. Shortly after his arrival, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din travelled to Woking, a town 40 km southwest of London, and also the site of the first mosque built in Britain, the Shah Jahan Mosque. Built by the British-Hungarian orientalist G W Leitner, with funding from Begum Shah Jahan of Bhopal, the mosque was in a state of disuse and disrepair by then. But Kamal-ud-Din identified it as an ideal centre for the propagation of Islam within Britain and Europe, and established the Woking Muslim Mission, which administered the mosque for the next half century. In less than five months of his arrival in England, Kamal-ud-Din, a Lahori Ahmadi — from a minority school within a minority sect of Islam — had also founded the Islamic Review, which would go on to become one of the most prominent journals of Islamic thought in the West in the 20th century.

Emerging from the colonial encounter, especially with Christian proselytisation in the Subcontinent, some theologically minded Muslims, like the members of the Woking Muslim Mission, saw it as their duty to reclaim Islam’s position as a ‘world religion’. The Review became their most notable mouthpiece. Though rarely made explicit in the journal’s articles, the historical worldview it expressed was also linked to the Mission’s association with the Lahori branch of the Ahmadiyya movement.

When the Review began publication, the Ahmadiyya movement was less than a quarter century old, having been founded in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a revivalist leader from Qadian, Punjab, in present-day India. Members of the Ahmadiyya community – both its branches, the larger Qadian group and the minority Lahore group – revere Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as the renewer (mujaddid) of Islam, and the promised messiah. The two branches, however, differ on his prophetic status: the Lahori group, with which Kamal-ud-Din was closely associated, argues that his status as the messiah did not mean he was also a prophet. The Qadian group, on the other hand, while believing that the Prophet Muhammad was the last ‘law-bearing’ prophet, consider Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a non-law-bearing prophet. Accusations by some that the Ahmadiyya movement is heretical are generally focused on this latter belief. But both groups have been targeted by anti-Ahmadi violence and laws, especially in Pakistan.

The Review archives enable us to examine the centrality of Ahmadi Muslims within the history of Islam in the West in the 20th century. Narratives of the growth of Islam in Western Europe and the Americas often emphasise immigrant experiences in late/post-colonial Europe, the rise of Black Muslim groups in the United States, and the contemporary struggles of Muslims against discriminatory discourses and laws on both sides of the Atlantic. But Ahmadi proselytisation efforts and their role in the growth of Muslim groups in the West during the early and mid-20th century rarely feature in these narratives, even when they are intricately connected.

The Review also demonstrates the cosmopolitanisms of early 20th-century Southasian and British Muslims working in Woking, as they expanded the reach of their publication across Western Europe, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia and the Americas. Its archives display the political views of a highly mobile, but often overlooked, cadre of Muslim writers as they navigated Southasian involvement in the two World Wars, independence from colonial rule, Partition and its aftermath, and the shifting politics of religion and immigration in the United Kingdom.

But how did a sober magazine, published by an organisation founded by a minority sect of Punjabi

Muslims based in the United Kingdom, gain such prominence? How did the *Islamic Review* grow from a niche publication aimed at proselytising the British elite, to a magazine of Muslim affairs with a global readership?

### Between Britain and the Subcontinent

Founded in 1913, and cycling through a number of variations of its name in its first decade of existence, the *Islamic Review* was explicitly meant to propagate the knowledge of Islam and Indian Muslims among the British public. In its early years, it was also important to impress upon readers the successes of missionary and conversion efforts. The January 1916 edition, for instance, opened with announcement that over the past year “about one hundred Britishers—men and women both—have embraced Islam.” Among the earliest and most prominent of the Woking Mission’s converts was Baron Headley, whose full name was Rowland George Allanson-Winn. Lord Headley formed a close friendship with Kamal-ud-Din and became the Woking Mission’s most prominent British advocate. By 1915, the Woking Mission and the *Review* had become closely linked with Lord Headley’s British Muslim Society, an organisation of converts who debated the position of Islam in Britain and Europe, largely amongst themselves.

The *Review* regularly featured updates of their meetings, designed both to communicate the normalcy of Islam to non-Muslim Britons and to display the progress of Woking’s missionary activity to Muslims abroad, particularly those in Southasia.

Another aim of the *Review* was to engage with the British academic community. Among the first articles in its first edition was a letter to the editor authored by Edward Granville Browne, a scholar of Persian and religious studies, who advised Kamal-ud-Din that the magazine would not succeed if it remained primarily academic, and that it should aim to be engaging and conversational. Browne’s engagement with the magazine is reflective of the personal relationships between immigrant Southasian intellectual and religious elites, and their orientalist counterparts in Britain. The editors and writers at the *Review* saw the British media and popular discourse as either prejudiced or misinformed about Islam. Their relationship with British academics and orientalists was somewhat different: they vacillated between praising their translation efforts as accurate and useful, and dismissing their understanding of Islam as lacking in complete theological comprehension.

Perhaps because the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, as well as Kamal-ud-Din himself, had studied and ultimately the rejected Christianity, the *Review* pursued debates with British Christian missionary ide-

ologies. The journal’s early writings placed a strong emphasis on the role of Jesus in Islam, and one recurring section, titled ‘Problems for the Evangelist’, aimed to poke holes in the proselytising positions of the Christian missionaries. But it also offered these same missionaries a space for debate.

The *Review* also carried frequent comparative pieces, often authored by British converts to Islam, like Hafeena Bexon, looking at moral teachings across Biblical and Quranic scriptures. The journal’s close association with the British convert community meant that it had a ready supply of willing authors who claimed extensive knowledge of both Biblical and Quranic discourses.

Even as the *Review* situated itself within British public discourse, its political milieu remained largely, though never exclusively, Southasian. This became particularly evident after the British Empire’s entry into the First World War, when articles in the *Review* emphasised India’s role in the war and began to debate the Subcontinent’s postwar political future, including independence. Like many contemporary publications with a Southasian connection, especially those published by Muslims, as the war came to an end, it took up the question of the British Empire’s relationship with the Ottoman Empire and the emerging Khilafat movement, a pan-Islamic campaign launched by Muslims of the Subcontinent to pressure the British to restore the Caliphate. Reporting on the meetings of the Indian Khilafat delegation with British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, the *Review* accused him of misrepresenting the interests of Ottoman subjects by “depriv[ing] the Mussulmans of these regions of their freedom and carry[ing] on aggressive Imperialistic designs under the cover of self-determination.” The journal even secured an original article from Khilafat leader Mohammad Ali Jauhar for its April 1920 issue, in which he argued that European Christians could not understand the institution or importance of the Khilafat movement without some grounding in Islamic history and theology.

As was the case with many Southasian Muslim journals and papers, the experience of the Khilafat movement made the *Review* a more explicitly political project. Prior to it, the journal focused primarily on clarifying points of theology and, in the first years of World War I, its political criticisms were largely limited to the occasional protest against the Indian Press Act of 1910 and other forms of colonial press censorship. In the wake of the Khilafat movement, however, the journal turned strongly towards Southasian Muslim politics. Never abandoning its theological bent, in the interwar period, the journal also featured articles arguing that

Britain's failure to preserve the Caliphate had perhaps permanently alienated its Indian Muslim subjects. Another, titled 'Growth of Nationalism in Muslim Countries', reprinted from the Calcutta newspaper the *Star of India*, argued that Muslims could be nationalists without undermining the global unity of Islam. Although this political focus never became the journal's primary emphasis, it reveals close associations between the evolving politics of Muslims in Southasia and the journal's Britain-based editors.

### **Muslim, Ahmadi, Lahori?**

Over the years, as the *Review* explicated on theology and politics, there was one curious omission from its pages: it rarely made explicit the Ahmadiyya associations of many of its most prominent writers. Some scholars have suggested that Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din was apparently advised not to attempt to convert British Christians to the specific views of the Ahmadis, and instead to stress a vision of Islam that was universal – almost minimalist. As a result, very few of the British converts who worshiped in Woking and contributed to the *Review* characterised themselves as Ahmadi Muslims.

The *Review* was founded only a few years after the death of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, and many of the theological differences between the Lahore and Qadian groups were not yet treated as settled by members of either group. Around the same time, Christian writers in the West had started expressing concern about the Ahmadis, with people like the Episcopal minister James Thayer Addison from Massachusetts characterising them as "a recent heretical offshoot of Mohammedanism." Perhaps because the *Review* was published in English, with missionary aims, it received greater pushback from the Christian critics than their Muslim counterparts. In the January 1929 issue of the *Harvard Theological Review*, Addison sounded an alarm to concerned American and British Christians about the work of the Ahmadiyya movement and the Woking Muslim community. Depicting the Lahore group as particularly slippery in its tactics of self-representation and conversion, Addison warned Western readers that the group was "actively anti-Christian" and attempted to appeal to the "Western mind" through reason and claims of "progressivism". For Addison, painting the Woking mosque and its publications as schismatic was ultimately way to undermine their legitimacy with potential British converts.

Some non-Ahmadi Muslim intellectuals in British India also decried the *Review*, for including quotes by Ghulam Ahmad in its pages and for using its press to reprint Ahmadi treatises. However, it was not until the interwar period that other Southasian Muslims began to express vocal opposition to the international work of the

Lahori Ahmadiyya. The Southasian critics, however, often distinguished between doctrine and missionary zeal, praising the later while decrying the former. When Lord Headley visited India in 1927, he was widely hailed as the most prominent of the British Muslims, but he also faced questions about his association with the Woking Muslim Mission and especially the Mission's Ahmadi character.

In other words, the *Review* and the Mission were received ambivalently by Southasian Muslims, who embraced narratives of European conversion but expressed concerns about the individuals who had converted the Europeans, especially Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. Umar Ryad, a scholar of transnational Islam, has demonstrated that in the interwar period even some Salafi leaders in the Middle East applauded the Woking Mission's conversion efforts and cited the *Review* as a powerful and positive force for the propagation of Islam in the West.

In the decade following Partition, even as anti-Ahmadi sentiment became increasingly vocal and violent in Pakistan, the *Review* continued to remain circumspect about sectarianism and included the writings of both Ahmadi and non-Ahmadi Muslim intellectuals. Indeed, many of its references to the persecution of Ahmadis in this period were relatively oblique. For instance, only months after the 1953 anti-Ahmadi riots in Pakistani Punjab, the *Review* defended the recent declaration of Pakistan as an 'Islamic Republic' against the criticism that the move was "theocratic" and "regressive", and by extension, against concerns that it would embolden anti-Ahmadi and anti-Shia majoritarian impulses. When the Pakistan government declared Ahmadis non-Muslims in 1974, the magazine was no longer around.

As the Lahori Ahmadi community expanded, setting up bases not only in Lahore and Woking, but also in the United States, Germany and Indonesia, its international centres became important nodes for the spread of the *Islamic Review*. This internationalism of the Ahmadiyya movement, and the aim of addressing a wider public, informed the writings of the *Review* in the mid-20th century, when its focus became more transregional.

### **A transregional project**

After the Second World War, the writers and editors at the *Islamic Review* increasingly identified with anti-colonial movements across the 'Muslim World', which for them also included areas with large Muslim minorities. But even prior to that, the magazine did not cover events and ideas specific only to Britain and India. In its first two decades, its authors maintained a close focus

on Egypt, where, they argued, the declaration of a British protectorate had made greater space for Christian missionary activities, endangering the local practice of Islam. Beginning in 1914, the journal was also periodically, although not consistently, translated into Arabic for circulation in Egypt, other parts of North Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, the Review's commitment to an internationalist discourse deepened and expanded. The January 1951 edition is representative of the Review's engagement with global anti-colonial and anti-imperial movements across the Muslim World. The roster of articles included 'The Struggle of the Tunisian People for Liberation', 'Egypt, Her Demands, the Future of the World Islam', and overview of the status of Muslims living in Afghanistan, Soviet Uzbekistan, Turkey and the United Kingdom. "The world of Islam has just started to take up the thread of its unity," one article explained, "But this unity will never be materialized or complete so long as foreign troops are on any... of its component parts."

While this perspective was certainly not unique to the Review, it broadly reflected the particular cosmopolitanisms of the Southasian and British Muslims behind it. The writers frequently cited their correspondence with Muslim intellectuals in the Arab World, Iran and Southeast Asia, and casually noted their own movement, not only between Lahore and London, Delhi and Woking, but also to Cairo, Damascus and Cape Town. By 1950, each issue featured a note advising readers that they could write to a local agent for subscriptions in cities as far away as Lagos and Basra, San Francisco and Kuala Lumpur, Colombo and Istanbul, Durban and Berlin. Starting with the September 1967 issue, the Review's title was modified to the Islamic Review and Arab Affairs.

### **American afterlife**

With the growth of the non-Ahmadi and non-convert population of Muslim immigrants in Woking and the surrounding areas in the 1960s, the influence of the Woking Muslim Mission declined. Around 1971, the Shah Jahan Mosque went through a change in guard, coming under mainstream Sunni leadership. With that, the Islamic Review, and associated Lahori Ahmadi missionary activity from Woking, ceased. But the journal had a curious afterlife.

Beginning in 1980, a new version of the Islamic Review was published in the United States from the California branch of the Lahori Ahmadiyya. Announcing the foundation of this new Islamic Review, the editors did not claim to be restarting the older magazine so much as paying homage to and honoring the

work of the Woking Mission. The new journal was an explicitly Ahmadi publication, featuring in its first year several extracts and commentaries on the writings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and articles decrying the persecution of the Ahmadis in Pakistan. Later issues even included an opening coda titled 'Our Beliefs and Aims' that stated the theological and social views of the 'Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam-Lahore', the formal title of the Lahori Ahmadiyya.

At the same time, the Islamic Review of the 1980s retained its predecessor's focus on reaching non-Muslims in the West. In some ways, California may have been an even more natural fit for the magazine than Woking: while the Woking Muslim Mission saw some notable success in converting elite and wealthy Britons to Islam, Ahmadiyya groups were more successful among African American communities in the United States. Whereas the Woking group had articulated Islam as a progressive and modernising religious ideology to educated, liberal residents of the late-imperial Britain, in the US the new magazine emphasised social justice and racial equality.

More than a decade before the foundation of the Nation of Islam, and nearly thirty years before Malcolm X led a relatively large-scale embrace of Islam among some African American communities, members of the Ahmadiyya preached Islam as a system of racial justice in the United States. Indeed, some scholars have argued that Wallace Fard Muhammad, the founder of the Nation of Islam, was shaped in his beliefs by his interactions with Lahori Ahmadi missionaries.

The second iteration of the Islamic Review lasted for less than a decade; it was discontinued in 1989. In 1991, the Lahori Ahmadiyya movement in Ohio restarted the Review, combining it with a discontinued magazine from Lahore titled *The Light* – which was forced to cease publication in Lahore due to anti-Ahmadi censorship – reflecting the long tradition of cross-continental collaboration that characterised the Review's history. *The Light and Islamic Review* continues publication to the present day.

### **Forgotten histories**

From its early years under Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din and its association with British converts to Islam, to its reincorporation in 1980s California, the Islamic Review's cosmopolitanism thrived on challenging expectations: it was an internationalist magazine that embraced nationalist movements across the Muslim World. It was a publication founded and led by Southasians that has been most remembered for its association with elite Britons. It was run by leaders of a minority group within a minority sect of Islam, but rarely made that fact explicit

and instead focused on universal appeal for most of its history. It was aimed at convincing the non-Muslim British public of justice and progressiveness inherent in Islam, but found audiences across the colonised world.

With its complexities and contradictions, the Islamic Review paints a picture of a rich and vigorous Muslim intellectual life in Western Europe in the early and mid-20th century. Indeed, the magazine's longevity and its resistance to easy categorisation seem related. Like many of its founders, editors, and writers, the Review showed a remarkable ability to adapt itself across geographies and regions, speaking to diverse audiences about what it saw as the universality of Islam. ■

## Everyday Muslim's "Islamic Review – Special Edition"

By Dr. Jamie Gilham; Shahed Saleem

*[Everyday Muslim is a project to create a central archive of Muslim lives, arts, education and cultures from across the UK. In October 2018, the organization published a "special edition" of The Islamic Review as "a humble homage to the magazine founded by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din ... and published from Woking for 59 years between 1913 and 1971." In this one-off edition, articles are presented by contributors ranging from academics to local Woking residents. We republish below two of these articles. The first is by Jamie Gilham (Honorary Research Associate at Royal Holloway, University of London), titled "Lord Headley and The Islamic Review." This article discusses Lord Headley's contributions to the journal between 1913 and his death in 1935. The second is by Shahed Saleem (Senior Research Fellow at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL), titled "The Shah Jahan Mosque, Woking 1889." This article addresses the architectural history of Britain's first purpose-built mosque and highlights Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din's non-sectarian and non-partisan approach, along with the mosque's journal (The Islamic Review), resulting in widespread appeal and engagement. The issue of Everyday Muslim's "Islamic Review – Special Edition" is available online at <https://www.everydaymuslim.org/projects/woking-mosque-project/the-islamic-review/>.]*

### Lord Headley and The Islamic Review

By Jamie Gilham

One of the most prolific British contributors to the *Islamic Review* during its first twenty years of publication was the Muslim convert, Lord Headley. Born Rowland George Allanson-Winn in London in 1855, the future Lord Headley first encountered Islam and read

the Qur'an whilst working as an engineer in the Muslim-majority Indian states of Jammu and Kashmir in the 1890s. Allanson-Winn returned to England, married and settled in Dublin in 1899, but sadly two of his children died in infancy and his marriage faltered. This led to him suffering a nervous breakdown and briefly being committed to a Dublin asylum in 1911.

Two years later Allanson-Winn succeeded his uncle to become the fifth Lord Headley and, shortly afterwards, anonymously published his pocket book of 'verses and hymns', called *Thoughts for the Future*, which he had written during the course of the previous decade. In the introduction, he described the recent past as 'a time when the hand of death was very near, and this world with its pleasures and pains had ceased to interest me very much.'<sup>1</sup> The book shows Allanson-Winn had sought and found comfort in religion, by rejecting the Protestant Church in which he was raised in favour of Unitarianism. An extract from *Thoughts for the Future* was published with the title 'How to be free from fear and grief' in the October 1913 issue of *Muslim India and Islamic Review*. It was Lord Headley's first contribution to the *Islamic Review*, albeit anonymously as 'A.W' (for 'Allanson-Winn'). The article reveals the Unitarian Headley had embraced the Prophet Muhammad alongside Jesus Christ as a teacher about God, and suggests a growing respect for 'the spirit of Faith which animates the average Mohammadan'.

*The fact of the real presence of God is the essence of the creed of the faithful followers of Moses, Christ, and Mohammad, and is the chief reason why they have no fear of death or hell, which hold out such terrors to many of us highly civilised Western Societies.*<sup>2</sup>

During 1913, Lord Headley read the *Muslim India and Islamic Review*, and that summer wrote to and met its editor, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din (1870-1932). Under the guidance of the charismatic Muslim missionary, Lord Headley quickly moved closer to Islam, with his conversion publicly announced by Kamal-ud-Din in November 1913. The conversion of a peer of the realm was a public relations coup for Kamal-ud-Din and the fledgling Woking Muslim Mission. Indeed, news of the 'Lordly Mohammedan', as one newspaper put it, made headlines across the world, and a selection of these reports filled the December 1913 issue of *Muslim India and Islamic Review*.<sup>3,4</sup> Symbolically, the second volume of that journal commenced with a photographic portrait of Headley and Kamal-ud-Din standing side-by-side and the caption 'East meets West in the unity of Islam'.

Although Kamal-ud-Din eventually returned to India, he and Headley remained close. Together they established the British Muslim Society with Headley as

President in 1914, and performed the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah) in 1923. They also toured South Africa and India for the Woking Muslim Mission. Reports of these activities pepper the pages of the *Islamic Review* up until the mid-1930s, when both Kamal-ud-Din and then Headley died.

Headley also authored around 80 articles, poems and letters for the *Islamic Review* between 1913 and his death in 1935. In fact, he made at least one contribution every year between 1913 and 1930, when he left London for semiretirement in the country. Headley's articles and poems were also collected into books, *A Western Awakening to Islam* (1914), *The Three Great Prophets of the World: Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad* (1923) and *The Affinity between the Original Church of Jesus Christ and Islam* (1927).

As a protégé of Kamal-ud-Din, Headley's contributions to the *Islamic Review* always reflected and indeed promoted the liberal and rational interpretation of Islam that characterised the Woking Muslim Mission between the wars. Several core themes dominate Headley's contributions. Firstly, his insistence that Islam is not antagonistic towards Christianity or Judaism but, in fact, the three are 'sister faiths'. Secondly, his claim that modern Christianity has been corrupted by 'dogmas and technicalities', especially the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, atonement, salvation and intercession. Headley was especially critical of 'sacerdotalism', the belief that atonement for sin requires the intervention of a priest. Thirdly, Headley argued that, in contrast to modern Christianity, Islam is a 'simple' and 'rational' faith and that the former had split into hundreds of sects, whereas the latter is essentially non-sectarian and apolitical.

Headley repeated and elaborated these themes in the *Islamic Review* from November 1913 onwards<sup>5,6</sup>. But early on he also used the *Islamic Review* to tackle the question of how Islam could be Westernised, 'so as to be brought into practical touch with Western ideas'<sup>7</sup> - a question relevant to Muslims in the West today. He told the first public meeting of the British Muslim Society in December 1914:

*We should, I think, give most careful attention to the very difficult and delicate task of showing that a universal adoption of the Faith by Western nations is possible without seriously interfering with the manners and customs of the West or the spirit of the teachings we find in the Qur'an. There is so much adaptability in Islam that we may hope to surmount any difficulties which may arise.*<sup>8</sup>

Headley discussed the 'adaptability' of Islam in relation to observance of its five 'pillars' in a non-Muslim

country like Britain. His thinking evolved over time and this is reflected in the advice he gave in the *Islamic Review*. For example, whilst he encouraged observance of the second 'pillar', *salat* (prayer), he concluded in 1915 that 'it is quite impossible for the busy city man to pray Muslim fashion five times a day at appointed times: the opportunities for prostration and conventional devotion can not be found.' He therefore advised that a Muslim who 'sends up a silent prayer that the Holy Spirit of Allah may in all things direct and rule his heart [will] surely ... be accepted Above, even though he has not had the opportunity of humbly placing his forehead on the ground.'<sup>8</sup> A year later, he proposed that public worship in a mosque should be 'supplemented by household or family prayers, where the household can be readily assembled, say, twice a day.'<sup>9</sup>

Headley also discussed Islamic prohibitions in the *Islamic Review*. On the question of alcohol, for example, he said in 1914 that 'drinking in moderation is the custom' in Britain and therefore 'it is too much to expect any sudden change' amongst Muslim converts. He therefore recommended 'self-control' but was himself arrested on a charge of drunk and disorderly behaviour in 1916.<sup>8</sup> Headley conceded in the *Islamic Review* in 1917 that 'even the moderate use of alcohol in certain conditions and on certain temperaments may easily lead to disaster' and admitted that 'I have therefore given up the use of all stimulants—even my favourite beer—in the hope of setting a good example and avoiding giving offence to any one.'<sup>10</sup>

Headley was also critical of his adopted faith and fellow Muslims, especially towards the end of his life when he witnessed the rise of sectarianism in British Islam. For example, he wrote in the *Islamic Review* in 1927 that Islam had nothing to fear from outside, except:

*what may cause obstruction and delay is the attempt to establish fresh sects within the great fraternity of Islam....The Sunnis and the Shiahis and Wahabis have all very decided views, and may almost be /oaked upon as 'sects', and in very recent years the Ahmadis, followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, proclaim the advent of their leader, whom they regard as the 'promised Messiah'. These latest reformers [Qadiani Ahmadis] insist that all those who refuse to acknowledge ... Ahmad as the Messiah shall be 'deprived of the light of faith' and, further, that the rejection of ... Ahmad 'means the rejection of the Holy Prophet Muhammad himself'. It strikes a blow at the solidarity of Islam which is to be greatly deplored.*<sup>11</sup>

When Kamal-ud-Din died in December 1932, Headley emerged from semi-retirement to write a short



tribute to his mentor, whom he described in the *Islamic Review* as ‘Saint-like’ and ‘one of the most distinguished Muslims of our time’.<sup>12</sup> Headley’s next contribution to the *Islamic Review*, published in January 1935, was to be his last. Entitled ‘Christians and Muslims: where we differ and why we differ’, the article was a summation of Headley’s earliest writing for the *Islamic Review*, arguing for the final time in print that dogma had corrupted Christianity from its original teachings and that *Islam* was closer to ‘the original simple teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ.’<sup>6</sup>

Lord Headley visited Woking for *eid al-adha* (the sacrificial feast celebrating the end of the *hajj*) in March 1935. He died three months later aged 80. The *Islamic Review* for September 1935 contained warm tributes to Headley, with the lead obituary concluding that, ‘It is difficult to write adequately of him who has gone. Our praise seems trite and trivial, our most heartfelt tribute all unworthy in face of the colossal fact of his immense and unique personality. Lord Headley’s death has left a gap which time alone can fill.’<sup>13</sup>

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#### The Shah Jahan Mosque, Woking 1889

By Shahed Saleem

In his survey of the buildings of England, Nikolaus Pevsner described the Woking Mosque as:

*An extraordinarily dignified little building, especially by comparison with other mock-Oriental buildings of the same date ... In an Indian rather than Arabic style: onion dome on delicate rubble walls, with a decorative three-part frontpiece in blue and gold, as pretty as the Brighton Pavilion. The inside is a well thought-out square with a dome on squinches, three ogee niches in each wall and a sober panelled apse and preaching box.<sup>1</sup>*

The mosque at Woking was spearheaded and commissioned by Dr Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner, a Hungarian Jewish Linguist who spent most of his working life from 1864 as Principal of Government College, Lahore, then part of British India. Leitner’s ambition was to establish an educational institution in Europe which would be a centre for the culture and history of India and the Islamic world. In 1880 the site of the Royal Dramatic College in Woking became available. Leitner purchased it and proceeded to reuse the premises to set up his Oriental Institute. The enduring legacy of the institute is the mosque, which was funded by the female ruler of the Indian princely state of Bhopal, the Sultan Shah Jahan Begum, after whom the mosque was eventually named. Alongside the mosque, a two-storey building was constructed as accommodation for the imam and as a place to hold community functions and meetings. This building was named the Sir Salar Jung Memorial Hall, after the then Prime Minister of the State of Hyderabad in central India. With two bays flanking a recessed central façade and a first-floor balcony, the building has the air of a colonial villa enhanced by Mughal-styled window and door arches, stone surrounds, fretwork and decoration.

The mosque was designed by a local Anglo-Irish architect William Isaac Chambers and completed in 1889. In its design it liberally embraces Mughal architecture, the style developed by the rulers of much of South Asia from the 16th to the 18th centuries. Earlier Mughal buildings in and around Delhi display a certain classical rigour and formality. This evolved in later Mughal buildings further south around the Deccan region of India into a more expressive architectural language. While the main elements of a central large dome, large central arched portico and smaller flanking bays with arched doorways or niches remain throughout the Mughal period, in the later buildings these become noticeably more sculptural. Chambers had taken and adapted this architectural language at Woking, with a dome that is an evolution of the well-

recognised onion shape into a much more spherical object.

The Shah Jahan Mosque almost perfectly captures the spirit of 19th-century ‘Orientalism’. This was a time when, for curious Europeans, there was a mysterious and fantastical place called ‘the East’. It was a place of strange customs, flamboyant dress and exotic women, encapsulated in a vast genre of Orientalist paintings depicting the East in theatrical ways. The Woking Mosque could be considered as the architectural equivalent of this Orientalist fantasy. It sits alongside other examples such as Leighton House of 1864–70, with its ‘Arab Hall’ of 1877–9, which could be described as outbursts of exotic flamboyance.

Leitner has been described as somewhat authoritarian in his control of the mosque and the Oriental Institute, and as somewhat patronising in his attitude towards South Asian Muslims: ‘With little self-reflection on how British missionaries behaved in India, he declared that “the mosque is a proof of British toleration and must be used in that grateful and reverential spirit”.’ Leitner is also quoted as having written that ‘the mosque is for the use of a select few persons’ and not a ‘centre of Islam in England’.<sup>2</sup>

Ironically, the mosque at Woking eventually did become exactly that – the centre of Islam in England. The Oriental Institute did not survive Leitner’s death in 1899, and the mosque fell into disuse. It was eventually revived by an Indian lawyer, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, who came to London to pursue a legal case in 1912, while at heart looking for an opportunity to further the cause of Islam in the West. When in London Kamal-ud-Din learned of the existence of the mosque at Woking, and later that year made his first visit. In a letter to a colleague in India, he described how he found Leitner’s estate and the mosque:

*A vast residential house, a room for keeping mementos from the East, and a small mosque to one side, which is in fact a room, five yards square. There is a very beautiful dome over it, on top of which is affixed a crescent. It has a high pulpit and a rihal [low stand] on which is placed a three-volumed copy of the Qur’an in large print ...*

*In the mehrab the Surah Fatihah<sup>3</sup> is inscribed in Arabic. Some small plaques with the Divine names on them are on the walls. There are three or four prayer mats in the mosque. In one corner of the mosque there is some equipment for performing the wudu and in the other is a small enclosure for the Imam. In front of the mosque there is a large open courtyard, within which is a*

*fountain occupying an area one, or one and a half, yards square. All around the courtyard is a wire fence and trees have been planted ... A few yards from this mosque is a small rest house known as the Salar Jang Memorial Hall, where a traveller is permitted to stay for a day or so.<sup>4</sup>*

Kamal-ud-Din and his companion then proceeded to offer prayers in the mosque, in a spirit of great joy and promise at the idea of a mosque in the Western world. Kamal-ud-Din wrote:

*I made a lengthy prostration, crying and pleading to be given the opportunity for the preaching and the propagation of Islam, and praying that the mosque may become a place for the dawn of the light of Islam ... This mosque in a non-Muslim land is truly ‘the first house appointed for men’. What a wonder if God were to make it an Islamic centre<sup>5</sup>*

It was a testament to the accomplishment of Chambers’ architecture that the mosque so thoroughly captured Kamal-ud-Din’s imagination: Chambers had encapsulated that sense of romance and nostalgia that the Orientalist vision was meant to evoke. Having discovered the abandoned building in the forest, Kamal-ud-Din appeared as a noble reviver of Islam in a land where it had been forgotten.

Spurred by this vision, Kamal-ud-Din approached Sir Mirza Abbas Ali Beg, the Muslim advisory member of the Council of the Secretary of State for India, and they were able to acquire the mosque and memorial house from Leitner’s heirs. From here began a period of activity and growth that would see the mosque take its place at the centre of Islam in Britain in the early to mid-20th century.

Kamal-ud-Din created an open and non-sectarian Muslim organisation and mosque at Woking and his non-partisanship resulted in the mosque’s wide appeal and engagement. It is said that in the 1920s and 1930s more than 2,000 conversions took place at the mosque and many of the key figures of an emerging British Muslim culture were associated with it. One of these was Marmaduke Pickthall, who edited the mosque’s journal, the *Islamic Review* (which ran for 60 years from 1913), and stood in as a replacement imam for Kamal-ud-Din during his trips to India. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, who had written the other main translation of the Qur’an into English, was a trustee of the mosque over the same period that Pickthall was working there.

Shahed Saleem is a Senior Research Fellow at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, a practicing architect, and a design studio leader at the University of Westminster School of Architecture. His particular

research interests are in the architecture of migrant and post-migrant communities, and in particular their relationship to notions of heritage, belonging and nationhood. His book, *'The British Mosque, an architectural and social history'*, has been published by Historic England. ■

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## Sufism and the Western World

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

[This article was presented at a conference titled "Sufism and the Western World", organized by the Moinuddin Foundation and Sufi Media Services, at the Ghalib Institute in Delhi, India in March 2019. The Editor was invited to speak at the conference, as a Muslim representative from America. The article begins with a review of the condition of religiosity in the West and how Sufism plays an integral role in Western society's understandings of spirituality. The article then addresses what the essence of Sufism is and how the writings of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, contain Sufi concepts and terms that unfortunately are misunderstood by many Muslims.]

### Decline in Religiosity in the West

The title of the Program this evening is "Sufism and the Western World". So, I'd like to begin by speaking a little bit about the condition of the Western World in terms of *religiosity*. Polls in recent times have shown a trend in which people in the West are increasingly turning away from organized religion. In America, for instance, there is a consistent rate of decline in the percentage of people who affiliate with a particular faith tradition.

And this growing culture of skepticism about religion is especially evident among young people. A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center found that among millennials (that is, those born between 1981 and 1996) only 4 in 10 people say religion is important

in their lives. And this is even higher for those who are younger, what is referred to as Generation Z (those in their early 20s or late teens and younger). In all, there appears to be about a quarter of Americans (23%) who have given up following organized religion completely.

Research has been done in recent years to try to explain this phenomenon. Some view this trend as a natural result of the *scientific age* in which we live, where people call into question the need for religion, which is viewed as stories of miracles the past, when witnessing extraordinary technological advancements and feats occurring before their very eyes. Others attribute this decline with a perceived *political entanglement of religion*, where religion is viewed as being at odds with certain social ideals people find important (like gender equality, non-discrimination of certain minority groups, or even issues like climate change that some view as contrary to scriptural interpretation). And still others argue this is a product of a culture of *consumer capitalism*, where, like everything else in their life, people get to choose what they want, including what faith means to them, rather than be bound by the established rules of an organized religion.

Noteworthy is that although the number of people who have turned away from organized religion is consistently increasing in the West, that does not equate to a diminished sense of *spirituality* in their lives. The trend of not affiliating with a particular religious tradition seems more to do with how religion as an "institution" is viewed and understood. It is in fact the lack of spirituality that appears to be what is missing by those who turn away from religion. Religion, unfortunately, has become viewed by many as simply belonging to a particular group with distinctive beliefs and engaging in certain rituals. Essentially, religion is perceived by many as being akin to a "game", where the object is to accept a certain creed and perform certain practices (much like steps one has to pass in a game) so that one can "win" in the end. So, the trend to disassociate with religion is in fact a rejection of this type of understanding of what religion actually entails.

### Sufism Providing Spiritual Balance

This is why the phrase "*spiritual but not religious*" has become so popular in the West. It is not spirituality which is rejected, but the lack of spirituality people desire to experience in organized religion that people find missing. There is in fact a yearning for spirituality, a spiritual component to balance the materialistic daily routines in which people live. Some people have incorporated meditation in their lives. Other practices like yoga have become popular. And many have found this spiritual balance in their lives through the teachings and lessons of Sufism.

And, the primary means by which people have been introduced to Sufi teachings is through books of poetry and other literature containing the powerful metaphors and allegories found in the writings of saintly Sufi figures of the past. If I were to ask who the most popular poet in America is today, I think many would be surprised to know it is the great Sufi Saint Mevlana Jalalud-Din Rumi. English translations of his beautiful works have sold in the millions, they have become part of popular culture, and have provided countless number of people a renewed sense of spirituality in their otherwise materialistic lives.

Whether it is from the poetry of Rumi or the writings of other Sufi Saints, the Sufi teachings and lessons seem to fill the spiritual void experienced by many in the West. It is appreciated as being universal in its outlook, applicable to all people, extending beyond the confines with which organized religion is often viewed. And because the focus in Sufi teachings is on the purification of the soul of the individual, Sufism is received by many as being inclusive rather than exclusive. It is recognized as the spiritual essence inherent in all religions – which is, developing a connection with the Creator and engaging in a process of development of the soul.

### **Sufism and the Spiritual Essence of Islam**

What is not always known to people in the West, though, is that this universal spiritual philosophy embodied in Sufi teachings is the foundation of the Islamic faith. Sufi teachings are firmly grounded in the verses of the Quran and in connection with the personality of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. And this neglect to understand the Islamic basis for the spiritual lessons contained in Sufi teachings by some in the West is understandable, as many Muslims themselves neglect to recognize and appreciate this spiritual philosophy as being the essence of Islam. Although the Quran is read and memorized, many Muslims fail to understand the underlying spiritual lessons and metaphorical meanings of the words they recite. The lessons of the great Sufi Saints are basically an unveiling of the literal words of the Quran and the external rules of the shariah in Islam. These lessons make manifest the great spiritual truths that are hidden behind the literal words or the external practices.

#### *Spiritual Development in the Quran*

This philosophy of spirituality in Islam will be discussed in detail in the next presentation by Dr. Malik, but I would like to share with you a few points in this regard.

The basic concept of spirituality according to Islam (as presented in Sufi teachings) is based on *connection with the Divine through the purification of the soul*. The Quran states that every person has a soul, and the soul

is the spirit of God breathed into each person. Therefore, every person has the divine spirit within them. And what this means is that we all have the divine attributes within us. Just as God is Loving, Merciful, Compassionate, Forgiving, etc., so too do we have these attributes within us. And life, all that this material world has to offer, provides us opportunities to develop these attributes. For example, one can't say they are a patient person, unless they have first been exposed to some stress. One can't say they are a forgiving person, unless they have first been wronged by another. And when we develop these attributes, like patience and forgiveness (by exercising them under the proper circumstances,) we become more "god-like" in our actions and this is what is meant by being "close to God" (we resemble the Divine attributes in our conduct with others). And this closeness to God by purifying one's soul is what "salvation" entails (not simply adhering to some dogma or performing particular rituals). This principle is reflected in a hadith, which states: "*Adorn yourself with the Divine Qualities*".

By way of analogy, the Quran likens the soul to a "seed." Just as a seed has certain qualities inherent in it that if cultivated properly can grow into a lush garden, so too does the soul have the divine attributes innate within it that if developed appropriately can lead to the spiritual garden of paradise (which is that state of being in which one is in union with the Divine). So, heaven and hell are understood as conditions (not necessarily two physical places). In every language and culture, we find references to burning with anger, burning with envy, burning with jealousy – this burning is actually the hellfire people feel when in a hellish state. And the condition of heaven is when one feels the peace and contentment of being close to God.

Hence, the focus in this philosophy of spirituality is on union with the Divine (being close to God by resembling the attributes of God in all one's interactions), not on the threat of hell or the promise of heaven. The female Sufi Saint, Hazrat Rabia of Basra, intimated this point in a beautiful poem, which states:

O Lord,

If I worship you for fear of hell,  
Burn me in that hell.

If I worship you hoping for paradise,  
Make it forbidden to me.

But if I worship you only for you own sake,  
Do not withhold from me your everlasting beauty.

Likewise, it is understood that the practices in Islam are not to be performed ritualistically, as a mere task or obligation to be completed, but rather are to be observed

with due reverence to the spiritual benefit that is to be attained from them. There is to be an appreciation that performance of the practices is not the *goal*, but only a *means* to help facilitate the development of the soul. *Prayer*, then, is not regarded as merely reciting certain words and positioning one's body in certain ways, but rather understood as a form of communication with God, where an intimate relationship is fostered between the devotee and the Divine. *Charity* is understood as not simply helping another in need, but an opportunity to help oneself by cleansing one's heart of the worldly dross attached to it. *Fasting* is not considered as simply abstaining from food and drink, but disciplining oneself to refrain from all bad habits – where hunger and thirst are simply reminders of God's presence throughout the day, thereby serving as a means to facilitate God-consciousness. And *hajj* (the pilgrimage to the *kabba* in Mecca, the center of Islam) is understood as symbolic of how one should strive to make uniting with God the center of one's journey in life; just as one circles the *kabbah* in *tawaaf*, one is to appreciate that everything in one's life should revolve around this ultimate goal of being close to God.

### Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and Sufi Terminology

And the means to achieve this goal of "closeness to God," according to Islamic spiritual philosophy (as presented in Sufi teachings), is to follow the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who is considered to be a universal messenger for all people. And this was one of the primary focuses in the writings of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the saintly Muslim figure from Qadian (in the Punjab region of India) and the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed to be the "*mujaddid*" (reformer) of the 14<sup>th</sup> century of the Islamic calendar. A *mujaddid* doesn't bring anything new *per se*, but rather only revives the spirit of the faith. And many Sufi Saints of the past are regarded by Muslims as *mujaddids* of their time, like Hazrat Abdul Khadir Jilani, Hazrat Al Ghazali, Hazrat Ibn Arabi, and of course Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti.

Hazrat Mirza Sahib emphasized this concept of spirituality, which was being neglected by many Muslims around the world. And he stressed the notion that following the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad was the means to achieving this elevated spiritual state. And he explained how this principle of Prophet Muhammad being a spiritual guide or intercessor between mankind and the Divine is indicated in the term "*khatam an nabiyeen*", which literally means "seal or last of the prophets". The verse in the Quran (33:40) in which this term appears states:

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the messenger of God and the *khatam an nabiyeen* (the seal of the prophets).

So, the term "*khatam an nabiyeen*" in this verse is given as a rebuttal to the argument that was made against the Holy Prophet that he did not have any sons. Hazrat Mirza Sahib explained that the term *khatam an nabiyeen* denotes that Prophet Muhammad is the seal (or last) of the prophets because he brought this final universal divine message to mankind and, therefore, was the perfect role model for how to follow it for all times to come. And the implication being that although Prophet Muhammad did not have any physical sons, because he was the *khatam an nabiyeen* (the perfect role model for this universal divine message), people would follow his example to attain great spiritual heights, thereby giving him innumerable spiritual children (as is evidenced by the countless number of Muslim saintly personalities throughout history).

And this concept of following the example of Prophet Muhammad to attain closeness to God is reflected in various terms used in Sufi literature. There is the term *fana fir rasul*, which refers to losing one's identity and becoming "effaced" in the person of the Holy Prophet. There is the term *zill-i-nabi*, which refers to following the Holy Prophet to such an extent that one becomes a reflection or shadow of the Holy Prophet. And there is the term *baruz-i-nabi*, which refers to becoming a manifestation of the Holy Prophet by modeling his character. All of these terms refer to how the Holy Prophet Muhammad continues to be a living presence and influence in the world through the faithful following of saintly Muslim devotees and their display of his subsisting character through them.

Now, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad used such terminology in his writings and because many Muslims were unfamiliar with these Sufi concepts, it was alleged that he was claiming to be a "prophet" in his own right. Ironically, he also clarified the Sufi concepts of "*haqiqi*" versus "*majazi*" (meaning, real vs. metaphorical) as an illustration of this process of becoming one with the Holy Prophet Muhammad – that when one follows the Holy Prophet's example perfectly, he becomes Muhammad in a metaphorical sense – but even some of his own followers failed to understand his words and took the terms literally, thereby neglecting the very moral of the lesson.

After Hazrat Mirza Sahib's death, some of his followers started claiming he was a prophet in his own right, a real prophet, and not a metaphorical resemblance of the Holy Prophet in the sense the terms *zill* and *baruz* actually mean. It was this belief which led to a split in the Movement, six years after Hazrat Mirza

Ghulam Ahmad died, and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement was created to continue the mission to revive the spiritual essence of the Islamic faith around the world by spreading its true, spiritual teachings as presented by the founder of the Movement.

### Conclusion

To conclude, this understanding of the spiritual philosophy of Islam (as contained in Sufi teachings) is very different from the Islam that is practiced by some fundamentalist Muslims. We see extremist groups, that have a very puritanical view of religion, causing much chaos in various parts of the world, using *their* view of religion to advance political motivations. Sufism is not only completely contrary to such extremist ideologies (being on the other end of the spectrum), it is actually acknowledged by many in the West as an effective counter or even antidote to them. Rather than religion being about domination and control, Sufism advances the notion of religion being fundamentally about love for all and peace within.

Although Sufism is merely the intellectual and emotional understanding of Islamic spiritual philosophy (the unveiling of the underlying meanings of the universal Quranic truths), in contrast to the fundamentalist interpretations by extremist groups it can sometimes be difficult to believe these divergent views are derived from the source. It is the Sufi view of religion – based on a God of mercy, compassion and love – that is resonating with people in the West, and is also what is needed to be revived in Muslim populations in the East and all around the world.

I would like to end on a light note by relaying to you a story from the great Sufi Saint, Hazrat Abu al-Hassan al-Kharaqani, which reflects the intimate and loving (and evening friendly and playful) understanding of the relationship with the Divine which religion may foster. The story goes as follows:

One night Shaykh Kharaqani was praying and he heard the voice of God say: “O Abu’l Hasan! Do you want me to tell the people everything I know about you, so that they would stone you?”

Shaykh Kharaqani answered back to God: “O my God! Do you want me to tell the people everything I know about you – your loving mercy and forgiveness, and everything I have seen from your generosity – so that no one would ever bother with acts of worship and would no longer prostrate in prayer?”

The voice of God replied:

“*You say nothing, and I’ll say nothing*”.

Thank you very much for listening. ■

## Muhammad: One Story, Multiple Narratives

By Prof. Hussein Aly

[*This article was recently published in Al-Qasemi Journal of Islamic Studies (Vol. 4, Issue, 1, 2019). The author, Prof. Hussein Aly, is a professor of Applied Linguistics and Translation in Cairo, Egypt, who is currently completing a Ph.D. in Islamic Studies at Indiana University – Bloomington. He is also the translator of the commentary of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s English Translation of the Quran into Arabic. In this article, Prof. Aly compares six biographies of Prophet Muhammad and focuses on their respective accounts on the conflicts between Prophet Muhammad and the Jewish tribes of Medina. After reviewing the select biographies, and identifying distinctive characteristics of each, Prof. Aly proposes a method of reading biographies of Prophet Muhammad that distinguishes between story (the objective elements of actions, people, time and place) and discourse (the subjective and/or creative representation of events and people).*]

In his book, *The 100: A ranking of the most influential persons in history*, Michael Hart ranks Muhammad number one. “Today, thirteen centuries after his death,” says Hart, “his influence is still powerful and pervasive.”<sup>1</sup> He continues to exist as a powerful source of stimulation for both Muslims and non-Muslims. Whereas some are obsessed by Prophet Muhammad to the point of deifying him, some hail all sorts of accusations upon him. Fourteen centuries ago, Quraysh was trying to find out ‘how to counter Muhammad without making him seem more important?’<sup>2</sup> They called him a mad poet,<sup>3</sup> lying sorcerer,<sup>4</sup> and obsessed man.<sup>5</sup> “In the twelfth century,” as Karen Armstrong states, “Christian monks in Europe insisted that Islam was a violent religion of the sword, and that Muhammad was a charlatan who imposed his religion on a reluctant world by force of arms; they called him a lecher and a sexual pervert.”<sup>6</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, he was called anti-Semitic,<sup>7</sup> a misogynist,<sup>8</sup> and a terrorist.<sup>9</sup> He is the same Muhammad for the love of whom first Muslims were tortured in the hellish heat of the Arabian desert, on a thin line between life and death, to speak ill of him. But many of them preferred death to utter a word against him.

Indeed, after centuries of describing his life, one still wonders who the true Muhammad is.<sup>10</sup> The question: which biography is not biased, particularly by young readers who would like to know Muhammad, is not infrequent.<sup>11</sup> Many people, seeing the complete devotion of Muslims to Prophet Muhammad as well as the total rejection of him by some others, find themselves

between a rock and a hard place.<sup>12</sup> This paper proposes a way of reading Muhammad's biographies. To start with, I argue that true Muhammad cannot be found in *sīra* works, which are creative representations of history rather than factual accounts of it, and as such they are overloaded with authors' viewpoints. As a result, we need to distinguish between story (the objective elements of actions, people, time and place) and discourse (the subjective and/or creative representation of events and people). In addition, reading Muhammad's biographies side by side helps seeing the events from more than one perspective. The assumption is that if story (objective elements of narratives) and discourse (subjective elements of representation) are distinguished, we will be able to understand both events and people better. The paper analyzes the major narratives that involve Muhammad and the three Jewish tribes of Madīna: Banū Qaynuqā', Banū al-Naḍīr, and Banū Qurayza. Although the story in the three narratives is quite similar, the representation of the events and people vary greatly.

A narrative is "anything that tells or presents a story, be it by oral or written text, picture, performance, or a combination of these".<sup>13</sup> Narrative theorists distinguish between the story and discourse of a narrative or the *way* and *how* of a narrative as Seymour Chatman calls them.<sup>14</sup> The difference is between the series of events in an episode and how these events are presented. That is to say, even when the story is the same, it can be presented variously. This is confirmed by Hayden White, who argues that history relies on narrative for meaning, and so purely factual history is far-fetched.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Boaz Shoshan believes that "the historiographical text, even when believed, or better still, 'proven,' to be factual, often adds up to more than the sum of its facts."<sup>16</sup>

H. Porter Abbott explains that any story is composed of events or actions in addition to the entities who or which carry out, react to, and/or are affected by the events.<sup>17</sup> An optional third element, according to Abbott, is the setting, i.e. the time and place of events. In this sense, the story can be defined as (a) chronologically-ordered series of actions, (b) which involve some entities, and (c) occur in certain time and place.

The story is straightforward. The discourse is not. Discourse includes so many variables that are difficult to squeeze into any one model. However, Gérard Genette practically reduces its variables into "three basic classes of determination."<sup>18</sup> These are tense, mood and voice. Tense is concerned with the story-discourse relationship in terms of time. It includes three factors: order, duration, and frequency. The order of events is supposed to be direct and chronological just as normal events are observed from a single perspective in real life. But some narratives can start at the middle or even

the end and go back after that to the beginning. These are called analepses. Analepses can be one of three types: (a) external, i.e. providing background to the narrative by introducing events which take place before the narrative; (b) internal, i.e. filling gaps in the narrative by introducing events which take place later; or (c) lateral, i.e. providing parallel narratives. Duration refers to how much discourse is given to a certain event, or how much time the narrator devotes to a certain event. For example, ten years in one's life can be given just one page, or, from a different perspective, they can be given a whole trilogy. Finally, frequency refers to how many times a narrative is mentioned or referred to.

Mood has to do with distance. "The narrative can furnish more or fewer details, rendered in a more or less direct way, and can thus seem to keep at a greater or lesser distance from what it tells."<sup>19</sup> The contrast is between mimesis, i.e. direct imitation without intermediary as in direct speech and diegesis, i.e. narrating the story. Voice refers to focalization, i.e. whose viewpoint is expressed. Focalization is "a matter of getting things in focus when looking through some device or other such as a telescope, binoculars, a microscope, or a mind/body compound considered as a focalizing apparatus."<sup>20</sup>

In short, the model of narratology used for the purpose of this study distinguishes between story (actions, entities, and setting) and discourse. Discourse covers the three aspects of tense (particularly the order of events), mood (directness and the amount of details provided) and voice (whose viewpoint is presented). This model is used to analyze the conflicts between Muhammad and the Jews of al-Madīna in six biographies: Ibn Ishāq<sup>21</sup> and al-Wāqidi<sup>22</sup> from the medieval period and Haykal,<sup>23</sup> al-Ghazālī,<sup>24</sup> Gabriel,<sup>25</sup> and Hazleton<sup>26</sup> from the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The paper focuses on the three narratives of Banū Qaynuqā', Banū al-Naḍīr, and Banū Qurayza. The three incidents are given due attention in most of Muhammad's biographies, and they raise controversy about the personality of Muhammad. I take these three significant narratives to examine how the story of Muhammad has been presented differently in different biographies. The purpose is not to evaluate the authenticity of each biography but analyze and compare to see how various narrative techniques are used by each biographer to present the story from a certain perspective.

### Biographies of Muhammad through Time

Biographies of Muhammad started as early as few decades after his death and continued up till now with a dozen of biographies each century. The earliest which survived is *Sīrat Rasūli Lah* by Ibn Ishāq (d. 767). It is reported that al-Mansur (d. 775), the second Abbasid Caliph, asks Ibn Ishāq to write a comprehensive history

book for the Caliph's son, al-Mahdi. Ibn Ishāq collects the oral traditions and creates a book covering narratives from the creation of Adam to the life story of Muhammad. The story that Ibn Ishāq has written his biography as a textbook for the Caliph's son raises the question of whether Ibn Ishāq writes his book to describe and explain or to teach and inspire.<sup>27</sup> For Chase F. Robinson, the purpose of early biographers of Jesus and Muhammad was to teach and inspire, and so they "constitute evidence for the history of ideas rather than the history of two people".<sup>28</sup>

Ibn Ishāq's book is later used by two Muslim scholars: Ibn Hishām (d. 833) and al-Ṭabari (d. 923), thanks to whom, most of Ibn Ishāq's original work has reached us. Ibn Hishām's biography of Prophet Muhammad can be seen as a revised edition of Ibn Ishāq's work. He adds, deletes and comments on it, but he also carefully documents whatever comes from Ibn Ishāq's work. Al-Ṭabari also uses Ibn Ishāq's material although al-Ṭabari depends on far more resources than just Ibn Ishāq's. Later, scholars have used these two resources to re-assemble Ibn Ishāq's work. This fact is and will continue to be a limitation on any study of Ibn Ishāq's work as it is not clear to what extent Ibn Ishāq's editors have been faithful to his work.<sup>29</sup> In spite of that, Ibn Ishāq's work, according to the majority of scholars, is among the most important biographies of Muhammad.

Among other early *sīra* works is al-Wāqidi's *Maghāzi*. Al-Wāqidi (d. 823) is a historian and biographer of Muhammad, particularly known for his work on Muhammad's raids and battles. Al-Wāqidi's approach in collecting the oral traditions is outstanding as he uses a rigorous scholarly historical method. It is reported that Wāqidi says, "I never caught up with a descendent or servant of a companion or martyr without meeting him. 'Did you hear someone among your family talking about the battle scene and where he was killed?' I ask. And if he gives me an account, I would go to the place and check it myself."<sup>30</sup> Among the distinctive features of his *sīra* work are recording all the narrators whom he reports their narratives, the date of each campaign as well as a detailed geographical description of the area where it takes place.<sup>31</sup>

As far as modern biographies of Muhammad are concerned, *The Life of Muhammad* by Muhammad Hasnein Haykal was written in 1930s. Muhammad Hasnein Haykal (1917-1996) is an Egyptian writer and politician. With a PhD in law from Sorbonne University, Haykal has worked as a lawyer for ten years before moving to journalism, where he is elected as editor-in-chief of *Al-Siyāsa* newspaper, which is affiliated to 'The Liberal Constitutionalist Party.' He is also appointed as the Minister of Education in more than one government

and introduces several reforms in education. Haykal is influenced by modernist reforms introduced by Muhammad Abdu and Qasim Amin. Haykal claims that his first and most reliable source for writing the biography of Muhammad is the Qur'an, particularly when it contains a reference to an incident in the life of the Prophet. In addition, Haykal consults the classical biographies, particularly *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām, *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn Sa'd, and *Maghāzi* of al-Wāqidi. What makes Haykal's biography of Muhammad different from many other Arabic biographies is that he engages in a dialogue with Western scholars and orientalist such as Émile Dermenghem and Washington Irving. What is significant also about Haykal's biography is the psychological analysis. He believes that advancement in psychological research helps explain many incidents that have been inexplicable for centuries.

Furthermore, Haykal claims that he follows the methods which are already acknowledged in the Western academia. He believes that since the earliest biographies are written more than a century after the death of the Prophet and are themselves influenced by various conditions, then the only way to accept or refute any narrative is due research and rational analysis. He also claims that his book is for Muslims and non-Muslims and that he is after truth alone regardless of the source.

In 1965, Muhammad al-Ghazālī (1917-1996) wrote *Fiqh al-Sīra* (Understanding the Life of Prophet Muhammad). Muhammad al-Ghazālī is known for his modern understanding of the Qur'an, and so he attracts a broad following. In fact, the title he chooses for the biography expresses an appreciation of more critical and deeper understanding of *sīra*. In his preface, he states that he makes use of works of both modern and pre-modern historians, but he does not follow the methodology of either. He explains that contrary to pre-modern historians who care most for collecting and recording details, modern historians are more inclined to analyzing, comparing and synthesizing the events into a consistent whole. For al-Ghazālī, both recording and synthesizing details into a consistent whole are important. But the problem is to find a theme that ties together the different events in the Prophet's life. For al-Ghazālī, what makes the Prophet's life one unit is spirituality. His purpose of writing *sīra* is to nurture faith and purify souls, as he claims. *Sīra* should not be seen, as al-Ghazālī states, as a form of entertainment, but rather as a source for inspiration. For him, Muslim's love for their Prophet is as great as the distance between their lives and his life. Subsequently, Al-Ghazālī writes *sīra* with the purpose of bringing Muslims close to their faith.

One prominent feature of al-Ghazālī's biography of Muhammad is the footnotes, which confirms his view



that *sīra* should not be a story for entertainment, but rather a serious work for thought.<sup>32</sup> Most of the footnotes are comments on *Ḥadīth* by the well-known Islamic scholar Muhammad Naṣruddīn al-Albānī (1914-1999). Al-Albānī is a specialist in *Ḥadīth*, and has taught *Ḥadīth* at the Islamic University of Madīna. He is also an active writer and publishes chiefly on *Ḥadīth* and its sciences. The contribution of al-Albānī to the book is significant as it provides an assessment of the validity of the sources as well as of the *Ḥadīth* al-Ghazālī depends on.

Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī, as he explains, has his own approach to *Ḥadīth*. He includes weak *Ḥadīth* when they do not contradict with the Qur'an. For example, although al-Albānī classifies the following *Ḥadīth* as weak: "Love Allah for the bounties He bestows upon you and love me for the love of Allah," al-Ghazālī does not find a reason why he should not use it. On the contrary, he does not accept the *Ḥadīth* of the Battle of Banū Muṣṭaliq as narrated in Bukhārī and Muslim and accepts a version narrated by Al-Ṭabari although that latter version is considered weak by al-Albānī. The *Ḥadīth* as narrated by Bukhārī and Muslim suggests that Prophet Muhammad has attacked Banū Muṣṭaliq all of a sudden, which finds disapproval in the logic of Islam and the character of the Prophet according to al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī believes that the *Ḥadīth* as narrated by Bukhārī and Muslim can only be a further stage of the incident, i.e. after hostilities has already started, when as a war strategy the Prophet has to deceive Banū Muṣṭaliq and takes them by surprise, as the narrative of Ṭabari suggests.

Al-Ghazālī claims that he is not the first to adopt that approach and that most scholars, challenged with re-evaluation of *Ḥadīth*, go along similar lines of thought. It is the conformity to Islamic principles as derived from the *Qur'an* and *Sunna* that should be the basis for accepting or rejecting *Ḥadīth*. Al-Ghazālī uses the same approach in writing the Prophet's biography. In his introduction, he states that he accepts what conforms to the *Qur'an* and *Sunna* and rejects what contradicts with them. In a nutshell, one can say that Al-Ghazālī has been elective as his biography encompasses features of both classical and modern *sīra*. Thus, he keeps the *isnād* (although in the modern form of footnotes), and at the same time, he is critical of the various narratives. As he claims, he tries to describe the life story of Prophet Muhammad as a live example of how the principles of Islam have once been applied fully in life.

Contrary to al-Ghazālī who is writing as "a soldier would write about his leader," Lesley Hazleton looks at the life story of Muhammad from the perspective of an outsider. She believes that "To idealize someone is also,

in a way, to dehumanize them, so that despite the millions if not billions of words written about Muhammad, it can be hard to get any real sense of the man himself."<sup>33</sup> Hazleton is writing about Muhammad, the man. She believes that "For Muslims worldwide, Muhammad is the ideal man, the prophet, the messenger of God, and though he is told again and again in the Quran to say, "I am just one of you"- just a man – reverence and love cannot resist the desire to clothe him, as it were, in gold and silver."<sup>34</sup>

Like all biographers of Muhammad in modern times, Hazleton's main sources are the early Islamic histories. In particular, she depends on Ibn Ishāq and Ṭabari. In her work, she mainly raises the question of the differences between early Muslim historians and modern historians. Whereas modern historians use more analysis, historiographies of early Islam care more about recording all accounts even when they are contradicting one another. Here comes the importance of writing a modern biography of Muhammad, a biography that allows Muhammad "the integrity of reality, and see him whole."<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, Richard Gabriel is writing about Muhammad, the man, and not the Prophet. He believes that it is religious analysis that "have sometimes made biographies of the Prophet partisan and unreliable."<sup>36</sup> Gabriel's biography, then, is different from many Muslim biographies which do not only include religious analysis, but are actually written as an expression of love and awe to the Prophet. Gabriel's biography is a military biography, and so it belongs to the genre of *Maghāzī*. In spite of that, as he claims, "the social, economic, and cultural environments in which Muhammad lived are also addressed insofar as they had an important influence on his military life."<sup>37</sup> As for Gabriel's resources, he uses the *Qur'an* as the most reliable source of information on Muhammad's military life, particularly when that aspect of his life is addressed in the *Qur'an*. Next to the *Qur'an* comes Ibn Ishāq's work on the life story of Muhammad, and finally *Ḥadīth*. The reason why Gabriel believes that *Ḥadīth* should come after Ibn Ishāq's biography, and not before, is that *Ḥadīth* "as a historical source... can at best be regarded as repetitious of those accounts within Ibn Ishāq's work or at worst as misleading and inaccurate because of the bias of the extrapolators themselves who interpret the reports."<sup>38</sup>

The biographies selected for this study include different methods of research and different perspectives. Whereas one of the major contributions of early biographers such as Ibn Ishāq and Wāqidi is keeping a record of the various narratives, modern biographers such as al-Ghazālī, Haykal, Hazleton and Gabriel focus on ana-

lyzing the narratives and synthesizing them into a whole that explains Muhammad's life. Whereas al-Ghazālī and Haykal are writing the story of the Prophet of Islam from the perspective of Muslims, Hazleton and Gabriel are writing about Muhammad, the man, from the perspective of outsiders. In addition, while some biographers deal with all aspects of Muhammad's life, Wāqidi and Gabriel focus on military actions and decisions. What is common, however, among all these biographies is that the story does not greatly change as much as the representation of the actors and events in the story.

### Outline of Three Conflicts

*Banū Qaynuqā'*. The story of Banū Qaynuqā' starts with a marketplace incident in which a man from Qaynuqā' is said to harass a Muslim woman, and is killed by a Muslim passer-by who sees the incident. Other Jews join the fight and kill the Muslim instead of referring the killer to Muhammad as an arbitrator as their covenant with Muhammad states. Muhammad besieges Banū Qaynuqā'. Ibn-Ubayy intervenes as an arbitrator and Muhammad agrees that Banū Qaynuqā' leaves al-Madīna.

*Banū al-Naḍīr*. As for Banū al-Naḍīr, the story starts with Muhammad's visit to them when he is seeking financial support to pay blood money for two people killed by mistake by Muslims. Banū al-Naḍīr agree to help him, but Muhammad discovers that they have been plotting to kill him. As a result, he besieges Banū al-Naḍīr. Eventually, Banū al-Naḍīr capitulates, and Muhammad allows them to leave al-Madīna with some of their goods.

*Banū Qurayza*. In the third conflict, Banū Qurayza collaborates with the disbelievers in their battle against the Muslims. Upon return from the battle, Muhammad besieges Banū Qurayza, who agrees to arbitration by Sa'd ibn Mo'adh. Sa'd ibn Mo'adh's decision is to kill all men and make all children and women captives.

### Muhammad's Biographies as Narratives

It is interesting to notice that the time span that early Muslim biographers cover is broad. They do not write a traditional biography that tells the story of an individual or even the story of a family. They set the life story of Muhammad as part of the history of humanity, which starts with the creation of Adam and continues up till Prophet Muhammad.<sup>39</sup> This is different from modern biographies whose time span is Muhammad's birth and death. In this sense, early biographers radically change the concept of a narrative which has a beginning, climax and end<sup>40</sup>. In addition, by setting the life story of Muhammad as part of the history of humanity, early biographers convey their understanding of life while they analyze the vast chaotic history of man into sim-

pler interpretable whole and the life of the Prophet itself as part of a divinely plan. This extended context, in which the reader is invited to see Muhammad as a Prophet, affects all other narratives including the narratives of Banū Qaynuqā', Banū al-Naḍīr, and Banū Qurayza.

For example, Ibn Ishāq and al-Wāqidi blame the Jews of al-Madīna for disbelieving in Muhammad's prophethood, and they see that as the main root of conflict. Ibn Ishāq starts the story of Banū Qaynuqā' with what Genette calls *external analepses*.<sup>41</sup> External analepses describe events which take place before the narrative and which can serve as a background for the narrative. Before the conflict of Banū Qaynuqā', according to Ibn Ishāq, the Prophet assembles Banū Qaynuqā' in their marketplace and warns them of misfortune similar to that which has befallen Quraysh in the Battle of Badr if they do not believe in his prophethood. Banū Qaynuqā' respond that they are real fighters and far away from the example of the unskilled fighters of Quraysh. So, the roots of tension go back to these events. Next to this introductory narrative, Ibn Ishāq mentions the Qur'anic verses that Ibn 'Abbās says they must have come down about Banū Qaynuqā'. These verses provide a conclusion to the story, "You will be overcome and gathered to Hell."<sup>42</sup> Focalizing the story from the lenses of the Qur'an prepares the Muslim reader to be strongly against Banū Qaynuqā'. Wāqidi reminds the reader at the beginning of the narrative of the covenant between the Jews of Madīna and Prophet Muhammad, and how Banū Qaynuqā' have been the first Jewish tribe to breach that covenant.

Similarly, Al-Ghazālī starts his narrative with how the Muslims have expected the Jews to be their supporters against the polytheists given the commonalities between the two religions, but the Jews, just as they disbelieve in Jesus, disbelieve in Muhammad and do their best to demolish the new Muslim state. Al-Ghazālī, like Ibn Ishāq and Wāqidi, refers to how the Jews challenge the Muslim army after Badr, and how the Qur'an warns them of misfortune. Haykal introduces his narrative with how the Jews of al-Madīna are concerned after the killing of Abu 'Afk, 'Aṣmā', and Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf for their sarcasm and/or conspiracy against the Prophet. Such incidents deepen the Jews' hatred for and apprehension of the Muslims. Their hatred shows up in the incident of the market, in which a man from Qaynuqā' is said to harass a Muslim woman.

Hazleton does not introduce her narrative differently. She also refers to the already tense relationship between Muslims and Jews, but she focalizes the whole narrative from the lenses of politics,<sup>43</sup> and as such she provides another version of the background to the exile of Banū

Qaynuqā'. On the part of the Jews, "Medina's three Jewish tribes had already been outnumbered by the arrival of the Aws and Khazraj in the fifth century, and now, with the rapid expansion of Muhammad's influence, they feared being marginalized further". On the part of Muhammad, he "was deeply disappointed by Jewish resistance to his message, it was equally clear that he needed to establish himself as no longer a man to disappoint".<sup>44</sup> So, the Jewish clans, on the one hand, are unhappy about the expansion of Muhammad, and Muhammad, on the other hand, wants a chance to affirm his status as the authority in al-Madīna. He finds Banū Qaynuqā', the smallest and weakest of the three clans, a good path towards his goal.

Richard Gabriel refers to the tension between Muslims and Jews before the exile of Banū Qaynuqā', but he sees the roots of tension in both religion and politics. The Jews have been hostile to Muhammad's claims to prophethood as well as to his expansive political power in al-Madīna. For Muhammad, if the three Jewish tribes decide to unite, they will definitely threaten his authority. "Of the Jewish tribes – Banū an-Nadir, Banū Qurayzah, and Banū Qaynuqa – the Qaynuqa alone were said to have three hundred soldiers with armor and four hundred without armor. The other two Jewish clans were either larger in absolute numbers or had stronger alliances with the Aws and Kazrai."<sup>45</sup> Muhammad decides to attack the weakest. They "were goldsmiths and armorers and owned no fields; they had their own compounds and a small marketplace where they traded and sold their wares."<sup>46</sup> Like Hazleton, Gabriel blames Muhammad, who has his political and military plans, and has waited a chance to implement them.

Regardless of which interpretation the introductory narratives serve, the technique itself is noteworthy. In particular, the way early biographers introduce their narratives indicate that they, by no means, are mere compilers of reports.<sup>47</sup> They have their own perspective, and they select the framework, which best serves their purpose. In this context, Ibn Ishāq stands out. Ibn Ishāq moves from the past (flashback) to the future (flash-forward) and then back to the present (the narrative).<sup>48</sup> His flashback is the breach of the covenant by the Jewish clan, and the flash-forward is their punishment as described in the Qur'an. By so-doing, Ibn Ishāq sets his viewpoint clearly. Regardless of what happens in the narrative of Banū Qaynuqā', they have breached their covenant with the Prophet, and so God punishes them.

Another narrative technique which is used to emphasize a certain interpretation is *focalization*. I have already mentioned that the different introductions given by the above biographers serve to focalize the narrative

from a particular perspective. Ibn Ishāq, for example, focalizes the narrative from the lenses of the Qur'an, whereas, Hazleton and Gabriel focalize the narrative from the lenses of politics and the military. In addition, some events can be focalized through the eyes of certain characters, that is, "who sees?" For example, in their description of the marketplace conflict, both Haykal and al-Ghazali focus on the Arab woman. They add adjectival and adverbial phrases that reflect the position of the Arab woman and indicate the sneakiness of the Jew. According to Haykal, the Jew comes from behind the woman to tie the hem of her dress to a post.<sup>49</sup> Al-Ghazali says that the woman has been unaware of the Jew, and when she stands up and gets exposed, she cries out for help.

Richard Gabriel describes the Banū Qaynuqā' marketplace conflict as follows: "The immediate cause of the break with the Jews was an altercation that occurred in the Qaynuqa marketplace involving some sort of indecency to a Muslim woman. Both Hamza and Ali, two of the Apostle's closest companions, were involved, leading one to suspect that the confrontation was deliberately provoked."<sup>50</sup> Gabriel invites readers to look at the incident from the perspective of deliberate provocation. He describes Hamza and Ali as sitting and watching the incidents unfolding, and waiting for the right moment to jump into the incidents.

The difference between classical and modern biographies of Muhammad can be explained in terms of Harry Shaw's two categories of narrative communication.<sup>51</sup> Harry Shaw sees narrative communication as belonging to one of two broad categories. The first focuses on external information and immediate perception: "If you observe two people conversing, you can take an objective stance in which you concentrate on what they are saying, on who is talking and who is listening, on whether the person who is telling the story is recounting his or her own experience or that of another (and in the latter case, if he or she does so by enacting the other person's words and actions or summarizing them), and so on."<sup>52</sup> The second category of narrative communication goes beyond immediate perception as it tries to enter the mind of the speaker and see what s/he is thinking of.<sup>53</sup> Modern biographies belong to this latter category. In particular, Haykal and Hazleton try to explain the events in terms of what a character might be thinking of.

What in Muhammad's mind, according to Hazleton, is disappointment and anger. He is so confident that the Jews will support him against the polytheists. And when they disappoint him, his reactions are exaggerated. According to Hazleton,

It may be only human to feel the most bitterness not for declared enemies but for those to whom

one once felt closest. Only they have the ability to disappoint deeply. The sense of disloyalty—“How could you?”—cuts deep, not least because it’s a defense against realizing how much had been assumed, mistaking friendship for unqualified support. When such expectations fall short, there’s a tendency to experience this as the fault of the other, and to see it as personal betrayal.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, Hazleton invites the reader to see the narrative through the eyes of Banū Qaynuqā’. “The last thing Qaynuqa wanted was to be caught in the middle of a power struggle like this.” They see Muhammad’s siege as “an over-reaction on his part” and “demonstration of his power and authority.”<sup>55</sup> Then the reader is invited to read Ibn Ubayy’s mind on his way “to intercede.”<sup>56</sup> “The Qaynuqa had been loyal to him, and now his loyalty to them was on the line – his reputation, that is, as a leader of integrity with the power to protect his allies. But the only weapon he had was outrage.”<sup>57</sup> By this psychological analysis of the characters, Hazleton hopes to help the reader understand the story better.

Similarly, psychological analyses dominate Haykal’s work. He introduces the narrative of Banū al-Naḍīr by describing the mood at al-Madīna after the battle of Bi’r Ma’ūna: On the one hand, “Muhammad was greatly disturbed and deeply grieved for the deaths of Muslims at Bi’r Ma’ūna”. On the other hand, “For *al-munāfiqūn* and the Jew of al-Madīna, the afflictions of the Muslims in al-Rajī’ and Bi’r Ma’ūna were evocative of the victory of Quraysh in Uhud. They criticized the Muslim victory over Banū Asad, and their dread from Muhammad and his companions waned. ...[Muhammad] assumed that there would be nothing better than forcing them into betraying their intentions.”<sup>58</sup> He also gives us a hint of the feelings of the Jews of Banū al-Naḍīr as he uses flashback to the killing of Ka’b ibn al-Ashraf: “They seemed as if they were mentioning the killing of Ka’b ibn al-Ashraf.”<sup>59</sup> Muhammad sees their suspicious moves and withdraws back to al-Madīna, leaving Banū al-Naḍīr confused as much as his companions.

Muhammad’s biographies can also be analyzed in terms of Ganette’s mood.<sup>60</sup> Mood refers to closeness to events which the narrator pretends to have, and hence the amount of details he is able to provide. Probably the clearest example is why Prophet Muhammad suddenly leaves Banū al-Naḍīr. Ibn Ishāq, and al-Ghazālī report that he gets revelation about Banū al-Naḍīr’s conspiracy, whereas, Wāqidi says that Muhammad leaves as if to answer a call of nature.<sup>61</sup> Hazleton favors Wāqidi’s report, whereas, Gabriel prefers a deeper drive: “hearts have changed.”<sup>62</sup> Robinson suggests that these varied representations result from the preference of the historian: “For every historian who suppresses a fact or point

of view, one can usually find another who provides it; and for every historian with a taste for the miraculous and legendary, one can usually find another with a nose for documentary materials (or another who embraces both).”<sup>63</sup> The difference can also be explained in light of the distance between the narrator and what is narrated. By citing something which is very private like answering a call of nature, Wāqidi presents himself as someone who is very close to the incidents.

Wāqidi also gives the impression that he is close to the events from his depiction of characters. Like Hazleton and Haykal, Wāqidi gives the reader access to the characters’ minds, but he does that subtly. Unlike Haykal and Hazleton, Wāqidi does not comment on the characters’ behavior and minds, and so he does not provide his interpretation straightforward and directly to the reader. Wāqidi gives the characters space to speak and express their viewpoint without author’s mediation.<sup>64</sup> In a lively conversation among the Jews of Banū al-Naḍīr, Wāqidi breaks many of the stereotypes - of early Islamic historiography as well as of Jews:

The messengers of Ibn Ubayy, Suwayd and Dā’ir came to [Banū al-Naḍīr] and said, “Abdullah b. Ubayy says, ‘Do not leave your homes and properties and stay in your fortress for I have two thousand men from my tribe and others from the Arabs who will enter with you into your fortress, and die to the last one of them before Muhammad reaches you... Ibn Ubayy then approached Ka’b b. Asad to support his fellows. But Ka’b says, “Not a single man from Banū Qurayza may break the covenant.”

Having despaired of Banū Qurayza, Ibn Ubayy turned to fixing what was between Banū al-Naḍīr and the Messenger of God. He was in contact with Huyayy until Huyayy said, “I will send to Muhammad informing him that we will not go out of our homes and our properties and he can do whatever he likes.” Having hopes for what Ibn Ubayy said, Huyayy stated, “We will repair our fortress, bring in whatever we need, prepare our streets and move stones to our fortress. We have sufficient food for a year, and our water is accessible from inside our fortress. So, do you think Muhammad will besiege us for a year? We do not.”<sup>65</sup>

It is clear from the passage above that early Islamic historiography is not a mere collection of reports as the above short passage is lively with characterization. Ka’b ibn Asad appears confident, honest and firm. He sees breaching the covenant as disgracing for him and his clan. Later Ka’b ibn Asad’s character develops as he becomes a less influential leader after he repeatedly fails to please the Jews in the way he handles the continuing conflicts between the Jews and Muhammad.

Furthermore, the character of *al-munāfiq* (the hypocrite) such as Ibn Ubayy is always incomplete in Islamic historiography and literature. It seems that there is no need to describe it further as it is described so clearly in the Qur'an.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, it is used in Islamic historiography and literature as a stock character.<sup>67</sup> When a writer uses a stock character, s/he does not need to give full information. He can leave his characters incomplete as readers can fill the missing characteristics from his/her schemata.<sup>68</sup> Wāqidi, however, gives a vivid characterization of Ibn Ubayy and makes him flesh and blood rather than a concept in the Qur'an. For Wāqidi, Ibn Ubayy tries genuinely to help Banū al-Naḍīr. First, he tries to mobilize supporters for them, and when this fails, he tries to fix the situation between them and the Prophet. However, this has been too late as Ibn Huyayy has already sent his response to the Prophet. Ibn Ubayy seems confident, smart, accomplished and charismatic. His dishonesty is not the dishonesty of the subordinate, but the dishonesty of a defiant defeated king. As for Huyayy, he seems to be the less independent and the less wise of the three.

Muhammad besieges Banū al-Naḍīr, and to demonstrate his resolve, he cuts some of Banū al-Naḍīr's palm trees.<sup>69</sup> "Cutting them down was a calculated statement that the Nadir now had nothing left to stay for, and a warning of what might happen to them if they resisted further."<sup>70</sup> Hazleton further explains that "In Arabia, trees of any kind were treasured, but date palms especially so. Each one represented generations of careful tending and work, so that to destroy the palms was to destroy not only property but history."<sup>71</sup> According to Ṭabari, the believers feel uneasy about cutting the trees, particularly after Banū al-Naḍīr have blamed them for that. Hence, the Qur'an says: "Whatever you have cut down of palm trees or left on their trunks – it was by permission of Allah so He would disgrace the defiantly disobedient."<sup>72</sup> Eventually, as Hazleton says, "the Nadir capitulated. They would leave with little more than their lives."<sup>73</sup>

In the conflict of Banū Qurayza, the character of Sa'd ibn Mo'adh has various representations. Sa'd ibn Mo'adh is the person whom Banū Qurayza agrees that he functions as an arbitrator between them and Muhammad. According to Hazleton, Ibn Mo'adh is a "militant hardliner," who is eager "for blood." He is known for "his prejudice...for the sword."<sup>74</sup> Ibn Ishāq's representation of Ibn Mo'adh is different at least on the way Banū Qurayza and their supporters see him. On his way to the Prophet, some people from his clan, apparently Muslims from the Aws, are accompanying him. They ask him to be kind to his clients (Banū Qurayza). They call him by his kunya (his nick name) out of respect. Like Ibn Ubayy, he also seems to be a respectful awe-inspiring leader. They say, "O Abu 'Amr! Be kind to

your clients. Indeed, the Prophet asks you to arbitrate to do them favor," but Ibn Mo'adh keeps silent as if disapproving of what they say. Like Ka'b ibn Asad, Ibn Mo'adh seems to be honest, confident, accomplished and independent. When he arrives, he seems very conscious of his decision. So, he asks both Banū Qurayza and the Prophet if they would agree to his decision. After he gets confirmation from both sides, he says, "My arbitration is that men shall be killed, properties divided, and women and children made captives."

Different reports in different biographies may require a multi-perspective approach to interpretation. A multi-perspective approach to Muhammad's biographies does not only tolerate multiple narratives, but encompasses, as well, the view that the narratives themselves may not reflect reality. As Chase Robinson explains:

In societies undergoing rapid social and political change (such as early Islam), oral history tends to be much less accurate. The material may be authentic, at least in that it represents a genuine attempt to make sense of the world, and as such it may interest anthropologists or anthropologically inclined historians. But in this sense it is much more useful as a barometer of social change – especially how people come to terms with the present by reconceptualizing the past – than as a record of what had actually happened.<sup>75</sup>

On the one hand, Robinson's view can explain the contradictory reports in incidents such as the unexplained departure of Muhammad from Banū Qurayza. On the other hand, it can explain the importance of multiple source reporting in assessing *sīra* as well as the importance of multiperspectivity in interpreting *sīra*. Multiperspectivity is the ability and willingness to see a situation from different angles.<sup>76</sup> It is a process in which one acknowledges the right of the other to see things differently, puts himself in the other's shoes, and recognizes the fact that our own perspectives are also affected by our own biases.<sup>77</sup> In this case, multiperspectivity requires critical thinking. By examining and comparing different representations of events, we can understand both the events and their explanations better. Adopting a multiple-perspective approach to Muhammad's biographies helps recognize the differences and similarities in the various representations, evaluate the bias in each representation, and problematize one's own view.

To conclude, both classical and modern *sīra* works are told from the perspective of the authors who use various techniques to represent the events and people in a way which conforms to their viewpoints. In the three conflicts discussed above, some authors prefer to focus on the Jews' attitude to Muhammad and explain the conflict in light of that, whereas, others stress

Muhammad's practicality in handling the conflicts. Reading the various narratives side by side indicate that the story is quite similar, but the interpretation of the story varies greatly. Although *sīra* writers use the same sources of material and that they rarely have new events to relate,<sup>78</sup> their final outputs encompass different, and sometimes competing, narratives. ■

### Footnotes

1. Michael Hart, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1993), 3.
2. Lesley Hazleton. *The first Muslim: The story of Muhammad*. (New York: Riverhead Books, 2013), 88.
3. Qur'an 37:36; Qur'an 36:69.
4. Qur'an 38:4.
5. Qur'an 25: 8.
6. Karen Armstrong. *Muhammad: A prophet of our time*. (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 5
7. Hazleton, 186
8. Howard Shin, *The Dividing Worldviews of Jesus and Muhammad* (Indiana: WestBow Press, 2015), 33.
9. David Bukay, *From Muhammad to Bin Laden: Religious and Ideological Sources of the Homicide Bombers Phenomenon* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2008).
10. Hazleton, 3-4
11. Similar questions are posted on-line: [https://www.reddit.com/r/history/comments/42o4a8/objective\\_biographies\\_of\\_the\\_prophet\\_muhammad/](https://www.reddit.com/r/history/comments/42o4a8/objective_biographies_of_the_prophet_muhammad/)  
<https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-unbiased-books-about-the-origin-and-history-of-Islam>  
<https://www.quora.com/Which-are-some-of-the-best-biographies-of-Prophet-Mohammad>
12. As Richard Henry Drummond claims, particularly in the Western world today, there is a need for "a fair and balanced presentation of the life of Muhammad." Richard Henry Drummond. *Understanding Muhammad and the Kuran: Islam for the Western mind*. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing Company, 2005, 25. E-book.
13. Manfred Jahn, "Narratology: A guide to the Theory of Narrative," *English Department, University of Cologne*, no. 2.1.2 (2017): <http://www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/pppn.htm>
14. Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 9. See also Dan Shen, "Narrative, Reality and Narrator as Construct: Reflections on Genette's Narration". *Narrative* 9, 2002, 123-9.
15. Hayden White. *Metahistory. The historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1973).
16. Boas Shoshan. *Poetics of Islamic Historiography: Deconstructing Tabari's History*. (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2004), xviii.
17. H. Porter Abbott. *The Cambridge introduction to narrative*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 17.
18. Brian Henderson. "Tense, mood and voice in film (Notes after Genette)." *Film Quarterly*, 36(4), 1983, 5.
19. Ibid, 13.
20. J. Hillis Miller. "Henry James and 'focalization,' or why James loves Gyp. In *A companion to narrative theory*. Edited by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (Malden, USA: Blackwell, 2005), 125.
21. Muhammad ibn Ishāq. *Al-Sīra al-Nabawīyya*. (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, n.d.).
22. Muhammad ibn Omar al-Wāqidi. *History of Muhammad's Campaigns*. Edited by Alfred von Kremer. (Calcutta: J. Thomas, Baptist Mission Press, 1856).
23. Muhammad Hussain Haykal. *Ḥayāt Muḥammad*. (14<sup>th</sup> ed. Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.).
24. Muhammad al-Ghazālī. *Fiqh al-Sīra*. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, n.d.).
25. Richard A. Gabriel. *Muhammad: Islam's first great general*. (USA: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007).
26. Lesley Hazleton. *The first Muslim: The story of Muhammad*. (New York: Riverhead Books, 2013).
27. Chase F. Robinson believes that "For most Christian and Muslim historians, the purpose of history was generally not to test, probe or explain, nor to provide an accounting for all events that correspond precisely with what had once happened. On occasion it *could* be some of these, but it was usually many other things, the most common being to teach and inspire by illustrating and exemplifying." Chase F. Robinson. *Islamic historiography*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 12.
28. Ibid.
29. See Donald P. Little, "Narrative themes and devices in al-Wāqidi's Kitāb al-maghāzī," in *Reason and inspiration in Islam – Theology, philosophy and mysticism in Muslim thought: Essays in honour of Hermann Landolt*, edited by Todd Lawson (London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2015), 44; see also Lawrence I. Conrad, "Recovering lost texts: Some methodological issues." *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 113, No. 2 1993, p. 260.
30. See Marsden Jones. *Muqaddimat al-taḥqīq: kitāb al-maghāzī li-al-Wāqidi*. (Cairo: 'ālam al-kutub, 1984), 6
31. Ibid, 31.
32. As Robinson explains, the elimination of isnād marks a stage of development from early to modern Muslim historiography. It has been also a solution for the problem of book size: "one solution was to eliminate the isnād altogether, which, in the modern idiom, amounts to dispensing with footnotes." Robinson, 97.
33. Hazleton, 4.
34. Hazleton, 3.
35. Hazleton, 5.
36. Richard Gabriel, xviii.

37. Richard Gabriel, xviii.
38. Richard Gabriel, xxx, xxxi.
39. See Clifford Greetz who defines religion as a system of symbols that helps formulate a general order of existence. Clifford Greetz. "Religion as a cultural system." In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essay*, Clifford Greetz (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 87-125.
40. See Brian Richardson who analyses some of postcolonial narratives as interrogating and extending "the traditional concept of plot." Since these authors write about extended periods of time, they "radically expand the conventional limits to the concept of a story." Brian Richardson. "U.S. ethic and postcolonial fiction: Toward a poetics of collective narratives." In *Analyzing world fiction: New horizons in narrative theory*, edited by Frederick Luis Aldama. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), p. 5. 3-16.
41. Gerard Genette. *Narrative discourse: An essay in method*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), 40.
42. Qur'an 3: 12.
43. "The real issue was not religious but political." Hazleton, 149.
44. Hazleton, 149.
45. Gabriel, 104.
46. Gabriel, 104.
47. See Robinson
- 48.
49. Haykal, 291.
50. Gabriel, 104-105.
51. The difference is also explained by Chase F. Robinson, who believes that early Muslim biographers "were generally interested not so much in what made their subjects unique as in what made them exemplary, and they favoured in their modes of characterization the external (appearance, speech, the sequence of events and actions) over the internal." By contrast, a modern biographer is expected to "get under the skin of his subject, to explain how and why he is in some way unique or exceptional – to show, perhaps most important of all, how he is in some way to be who he was." Robinson, 61-64.
52. Harry E. Shaw, "Why won't our terms stay put? The narrative communication diagram scrutinized and historicized." In *In A companion to narrative theory*, edited by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (MA/ USA: Blackwell, 2005), 300. 299-311
53. Harry E. Shaw, p. 300.
54. Hazleton, 147.
55. Hazleton, 151.
56. Hazleton, 151.
57. Hazleton, 151.
58. Haykal, 319.
59. Haykal, 319.
60. Brian Henderson. "Tense, mood and voice in film (Notes after Genette)." *Film Quarterly*, 36(4), 1983, 13.
61. Wāqidi, 355.
62. Gabriel, 128.
63. Robinson, p. 144.
64. "The single most distinctive feature of Islamic historiography is the *khbar-isnād* unit, which, transmitted, transformed, compiled and arranged according to a variety of formats, functions as the building block of large-scale historical works." Robinson, p. 92.
65. Wāqidi, 359.
66. See, for example, Qur'an 4: 142; Qur'an 63.
67. Jannidis, Fotis: "Character," in *The living handbook of narratology*, edited by Hühn, Peter et al. (Hamburg: Hamburg University Press), paragraph 16-36. URL = [hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php?title=Character&oldid=2042](http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php?title=Character&oldid=2042). [view date: 11 Feb 2018]
68. Critten, Charles (1982). *Fictional Characters and Logical Completeness*. *Poetics* 11: (331-44). Lamarque, Peter. *How to Create a Fictional Character*. (eds. (2003) ) in *The Creation of Art: New Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics*, edited by B. Gaut & P. Livingston, 33-5. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003).
69. Gabriel, 128.
70. Hazleton, 165.
71. Hazleton, 165.
72. Qur'an: 59:5
73. Hazleton, 166.
74. Hazleton, 184.
75. Robinson, 10-11.
76. Ann Low-Ber. *The Council of Europe and school history*. (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1997), 45-55.
77. See Robert Stradling. *Multiperspectivity in history teaching: a guide for teachers*. (Council of Europe, 2003). See also K. Peter Fritzsche. "Unable to be tolerant?" In *Tolerance in transition*, edited by Russell F. Farnen, Karl Peter Fritzsche, Ivan Kos & Rüdiger Meyenberg. (Oldenburg: bis, 2001).
78. Muzaffar Iqbal, "Living in the time of prophecy: Internalized Sīrah texts." *Islamic Studies* 50, No. 2 (2011), 204.

## Performance of Good Deeds, with Sincerity

Eid ul Fitr Sermon, June 2019

By Ebrahim Mohamed

[This article comprises the Eid ul Fitr Sermon delivered in June 2019 by Ebrahim Mohamed, the President of the South Africa branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. Mr. Mohamed begins by discussing the everlasting effect Ramadan is meant to have on the one observing the holy month. He then uses the occasion of Ramadan to remind us that, according to Islam, our actions and practices must never be performed ritualistically but rather with sincerity of heart and purpose. Mr. Mohamed ends by addressing the need to propagate the message of the Holy Quran, as a book of divine guidance, to the world, and further explains how the commentary by Maulana Muhammad Ali - inspired by the teachings of the Mujaddid of the Age, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad – facilitates the fulfilment of this great spiritual need.]

He is the Living, there is no God but He; so call on Him, being sincere to Him in obedience. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds! (40:65).

The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was revealed, a guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion (2:185).

All praise is due to Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful. We thank Him for having blessed us with the holy month of Ramadan. A month of reflection; of introspection; of quenching our spiritual thirst through fasting and prayers; of quickening the dormant feelings of empathy for the poor and indigent; of sharing and giving in charity, seeking thereby the pleasure of Almighty Allah. Even in a world beset with materialism, Ramadan brings a heavenly atmosphere that touches the soul in many ways. This is what happens when humankind collectively strives to gain nearness to Allah; not individually like the single-minded hermit in the jungle but rather as one unit - a synergy of human souls - following the same pattern of fasting, prayers and charity across mother earth to taste the sweet spiritual blessings and joys of the Holy Month. Ramadan teaches us that human weaknesses prompted by our low desires that impede our spirituality can be brought under control and mastered through fasting, intensified prayers, charity, listening to the melodious recitals of the Holy Quran that resonate with the calls to prayer that fill the air of cities all over the world where Muslims reside; but most importantly it teaches us to

seek understanding, inspiration and guidance from the Holy Quran, the ultimate Criterion of all wisdom and guidance man would ever need for his success in this life and the next.

In the month of Ramadan, the devil that targets our base desires has been fettered with the chains of enhanced faith that marked the believers' resolve to transform their lives for the better. Thus, Ramadan taught us how to say NO to the promptings of the slinking devil and YES to the promptings of the angels that descend to inspire us and strengthen our will to do good and forbid evil. This is the ideal inspirational and transformative effect Ramadan is meant to have. However, the one thing the Holy Quran repeatedly teaches us is to conduct our *ibadat* (all acts of worship) with sincerity of heart and purpose; as beautifully stated in the Holy Quran: *Muhlisina lahudeena* ('Being sincere to Him in obedience'). This is the overriding theme of this year's khutba and I pray you will find it beneficial and useful.

Almighty Allah does not love superficiality and hypocrisy. Put simply, it is not about the quantity of your deeds but the quality. We have seen so many prayers surfacing and being circulated on social media during the holy days. These prayers whilst good by itself should not be made into a sort of ritualistic 'life or death, must do or else' undertaking, and with the notion that there is risk of being deprived of Allah's mercy, especially if you do not observe it on a particular night. The Holy Quran teaches us that Almighty Allah listens to prayers all the time when we appeal to Him **with sincerity of heart**. In fact, in the verse following the verse on fasting, Almighty Allah tells us – '*And when My servants ask thee concerning Me, surely I am near - I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me - so they should hear My call - and believe in Me - that they may walk in the right way*' – (2:186). Almighty Allah, indeed, is near to us all the time and He answers our prayers, but because we are so obsessed with worldly things, are weak of faith and often do not 'walk in the right way,' we distance ourselves from Allah and therefore are unable to hear His call.

At least in the month of Ramadan some of the veils of materialism were lifted as a result of our fasting and prayers, and therefore during this time our supplications have added efficacy. And, therefore, it is important that we make our best efforts to remain firm in our belief in Allah's Mercy and firm in our resolve to 'walk in the right way' and not deviate from the straight path if we are hopeful of our prayers being answered. And this should be our position not only in Ramadan but throughout our lives. Another thing to remember is that our prayers should not be made to obtain momentary relief from an immediate crisis without showing grati-



tude after being saved from distress. The Holy Quran warns us of such hypocrisy so common in human society. For example, in chapter 41 verses 50 and 51, we read:

And if We make him taste mercy from Us after distress has touched him, he says: This is due to me, and I think not that the Hour will come to pass; and if I am sent back to my Lord, I shall have sure good with Him...

And when We show favour to man, he turns away and withdraws himself; but when evil touches him, he is full of duah- i-arithin - lengthy supplications.

Therefore, it is not the ‘lengthy supplications’ (duahs) that we make; nor the additional prayers; nor the amount of days we fast; nor the amount of money we give away in charity, by itself that are of importance to Almighty Allah; it is the sincerity that accompanies such noble acts of worship that is of paramount importance. If such acts are devoid of sincerity without constant reminders that we are nothing without the Beneficence of Almighty Allah, it loses its value in the sight of Almighty Allah.

A ‘high and mighty’ attitude without humility and gratitude is condemned in the Holy Quran. Thus, we are warned: “So woe to the praying ones” (107:4). ‘Woe’ means ‘despair’ ‘unhappiness’ ‘wretchedness’ ‘despondency’ etc. it is likened to ‘distress.’ Muslims may argue that their lengthy supplications and extra prayers ought to bring them happiness and success and not despair. Indeed it should! So who are the Holy Quran referring to when it is says ‘woe’ to the *mussalin*; the ‘praying ones?’ The Holy Quran answers and says it is those ... “Who are unmindful of their prayer!” (107:5). ‘Unmindful’ means ‘not to be conscious of or aware of’; it also means ‘paying no heed to’; or to be ‘careless, reckless, etc.’ So the ‘praying ones’ who are ‘unmindful of their prayers’ are the people who are not conscious of the fact that prayer is meant to be a communion with Almighty Allah; it is meant to build a connectivity between mortal man and the Almighty, Lord of the Universe. The Holy Quran is thus warning us that prayer should not be treated as a mere ritual to be rushed through aimlessly, merely to placate the conscience. Neither should it be driven by an over-blown ego, zealous to impress others with a pretentious display of piety often confined to nothing more than superficial flowing gowns and neatly trimmed beards. These are the ones, the Holy Quran says, are those: “Who do (good) to be seen (107:6). There are many who give in charity; who are present in the mosque five times a day; who give gilded speeches and sermons on social media; on television; on the radio. These are all very good, but of little

use if done for mere show - ‘doing good to be seen’ - rather than to serve Almighty Allah.

These ‘egotists’ you will find are often the ones whose hearts are not tempered with kindness and empathy. Their attitudes are often marred by an indifference to the plights of the poor and the orphans, and thus the Quran says of them: “And (they) refrain from acts of kindness!” (107:7). *Ma’un* (‘acts of kindness’) can be anything from removing a banana peel out of the way where people walk, a smile to a neighbour, giving an ear to the elderly, visiting the sick, feeding the beggar and the wayfarer. It is these humble acts of kindness done with love, empathy and sincerity without show or for worldly recognition and reward that the Holy Quran is drawing our attention to as being of value in the sight of Almighty Allah.

The same attitude of ‘unmindfulness’ in prayers and condescendingly showing off our deeds, both of which are condemned in the Holy Quran, applies to giving in charity as well. The Holy Quran makes this quite clear in no uncertain terms when it states in 2:263-264:

A kind word with forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury. And Allah is Self-sufficient, Forbearing.

O you who believe, make not your charity worthless by reproach and injury, like him who spends his wealth to be seen of men and believes not in Allah and the Last Day.

It is clear from these verses that it is extremely hateful in the sight of Almighty Allah to injure by condescending and belittling those who you gave your charity to or even reminding them of such charity. If you do this your charity becomes ‘worthless’ in the sight of Allah. Your charity should be made in the same spirit of empathy and dignity as when you utter a kind word tempered with forgiveness.

We can see now from these lessons in the Holy Quran how important the adoption of the right ‘attitude’ of sincerity is in whatever we do; whether it is our fasts; our prayers; giving in charity; our relationships with family and friends etc. It will benefit the whole community much if our attitudes to life should follow the guidance of the Holy Quran and not the dictates of our egos. Indeed, the Holy Quran calls on us to adopt an attitude that will ensure that we are of those:

Who are humble in their prayers,  
And who shun what is vain,  
And who act for the sake of purity (23:2-4).

Remember brothers and sister, the 1st of Shawaal beckons the timing of the propagation of the Holy Quran. To do this effectively much work is required and many sac-

rifices financially and physically are required. The Holy Quran as we all know was revealed in Arabic, the mother tongue of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Mujaddid of the Age, conducted deep research on the Arabic language and proved with solid arguments that Arabic was indeed the ‘mother of all languages’ and thus the ideal medium for the expression of the final prophetic Word of Almighty Allah meant for the benefit of the entire world. There is no other language that has the capacity to express subtle and fine religious and secular truths, especially the lofty descriptions of the attributes of the Divine Being, as does the classical Quranic Arabic. But the Holy Quran was meant for the entire world and not just for the Arabs and this brought to fore the necessity of translating the Holy Quran into different languages of the world. But the translation of the Holy Quran is not the work of just anyone; it requires, as the Holy Quran says in chapter 3 verse 7, pure minded, rightly guided persons, deeply rooted in knowledge and understanding, who are free of perverse tendencies and biases.

Let’s look at the English translation which became a necessity of paramount importance with the establishment of the British Empire that dominated most of the world in the late 18<sup>th</sup> early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first English translations were by Christians of British descent. These translations, well intended as it were, suffered in purity because of obvious Christian evangelical bias, which in many instances cast the Holy Prophet and in particular Islam in a bad light. At that time Islam had suffered serious setbacks because of the infiltration and dominance of perverted ideologies and thinking of the *ulema* of the time. One or two Muslims attempted to translate the Quran into English but their attempts were localized to its place of origin in India, and besides it was fragmentary, lacked insightful commentary that adequately addressed the negative issues facing Islam at

the time. It thus had no far reaching impact. A scholarly translation brought about under Divine guidance and inspiration that met the challenges Islam was facing at the time was indeed needed. This was indeed the task of a *Mujaddid* raised by Almighty Allah and not just any ordinary scholar.

It was Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who said he was that Mujaddid. His works in defense of Islam and revivalist teachings proved his claim beyond a shadow of a doubt. Whilst the Muslim world was in a state of slumber and sheer apathy to the needs of Islam, he was the one who addressed the false doctrines and errors that had crept into Islam via misguided *ulema* under the influence of perverse Christian and Jewish thinking in particular such anti-Quranic teachings such as:

- Calling Muslims Kafir.
- The doctrine of abrogation of verses in the Holy Quran.
- Jihad as an aggressive war and a means of forcing people to accept Islam.
- Treating the Holy Quran secondary to the opinions of jurists.
- Acceptance of hadith that contradicts the Holy Quran.
- The belief that Jesus ascended into heaven with his physical body.
- That saintly revelations and ijthad (rational thinking) had stopped.
- That apostates and adulterers should be executed.
- Abuse of polygamy and women in general.
- The keeping of sex-slaves.
- The misidentification of Gog and Magog and ‘the Beast from the Earth’; *etc.*

Besides this, he rebutted Christian, Jewish and Hindu propaganda against Islam by writing profusely against it in defense of Islam. As mentioned, he did it at a time when Muslims were apathetic to the needs of Islam wasting their time away by fighting amongst each other much like they are still doing today. He was thus quite rightly given the task by Almighty Allah to bring into existence not only an English translation of the Holy Quran but one with adequate commentary addressing all those false, un-Quranic perversities outlined above.

It was in this context that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, saw in a true dream, that this noble task should be assigned to Maulana Muhammad Ali; a righteous, extremely dedicated and sincere follower adept in the English language. Anyone who has read, nay! studied the English translation by Maulana Muhammad Ali with commentary first released in 1917, more than a century ago, will testify that this is the only English translation that addresses all the discrepancies outlined above and thus you will understand why it is of such

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precious value to us. I challenge anyone still cynical towards and sceptical of the reformative work of this *Mujaddid* to go and interview the Taliban, ISIS, Al Qaeda, the Mullas of Pakistan and India and even here in South Africa about their understanding of the above-mentioned discrepancies, especially the problems with their twisted interpretations of *jihad* and their expectation of the return of a militant messiah, Jesus Christ himself; then visit the millions of victims, the widows, the orphans, the maimed in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia who have suffered as a result of the violence carried out by these fanatics in the name of Islam and try and work out for yourselves just why they, besides serving as proxies for other nations, are behaving in this disgusting manner. The ideologies motivating those who kill in the name of Islam are based on those false interpretations of the Holy Quran and Hadith which the *Mujaddid* came to address as mentioned above; but he was ignored.

We must, however, bear in mind that no translation can ever be entirely perfect. And as time progresses and as new learnings unfold, who knows, Almighty Allah may raise another rightly guided servant of His to bring forward even more in depth and enlightening interpretations in the future. For now this translation is the touchstone of all translations and it is our task to ensure that it reaches the far corners of the world. There is no greater work in the sight of Almighty Allah than to propagate the message of the Holy Quran as best as you are able to. Remember our prayers, our fasts, our charities, our pilgrimage are for ourselves. It does not benefit Almighty Allah Who is Self-Sufficient but it benefits His mortal servants. The Holy Quran says: ‘And Allah is Self-Sufficient and you are needy (47:38).’ What the Almighty requires from us is to deliver His message to the furthest corners of the world so that others who have not received it may benefit from it. The Holy Quran encourages:

And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful (3:104).

Our organization was started on the broad principle of the injunction contained in this verse i.e. spreading goodness in the way of Allah by means of the Holy Quran. We are proud pioneers of this work in the West. Our organization has seen to the translation of the Holy Quran into over 20 different languages as well as seen to the dissemination of hundreds of thousands of it since 1917 across the world and is ongoing.

Unfortunately, like the historians of who tend to suppress the real truths by not mentioning the great contributions Muslims made to the advancement of civiliza-

tion, so our own Muslim brothers deliberately ignore the great contributions made by the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam to the spread of the truth of Islam in the world. When Maulana Muhammad Ali’s English translation came out in 1917 it was revolutionary in that it made a huge impact on Western thinking and their opinions of Islam. A great admirer, Maulana Yaqub Khan, puts it very well:

Maulana Muhammad Ali’s Translation marks a definite epoch in the understanding of Islam. Among the Muslim intelligentsia it positively arrested the creeping decay of faith as a result of Western materialistic influences, and the sceptical trends of Western philosophic thought.

In the realm of Western scholarship, the impact of this Translation is noticeable in the changed outlook on Islam and the changed tone of literature about Islam that has since appeared. The very first indications of such wholesome change are met with in the writings of a man of no less scholarly stature than H.G. Wells. In 1920, when his work *The Outline of History*, appeared, it carried the whole section 16 of Chapter 3 as rendered in this Translation, describing it as an example of the Quran’s “majestic utterances from the recent orthodox translation by the Maulvi Muhammad Ali.

Interpreting the Word of God calls for great gifts of scholarship, no doubt, but it requires something much more, which no scholarship can confer – the gift of inner purity. Maulana Muhammad Ali wielded a scholar’s pen with a saint’s hand, and that is where lay the secret of this Translation becoming a real spiritual force and a beacon of light for seekers-after-truth.

Indeed, this is what distinguishes Muhammad Ali from the host of all other translators. We are therefore appealing to all to support this cause of making available this translation of the Holy Quran to as many of those who yearn for this light; even if you purchase just one Quran and donate it to a deserving family member, friend or stranger. In the broader scheme of things you will soon realize that it is more rewarding than just handing out food to sustain the body and neglect to provide food for the soul.

Therefore, as we say farewell to Ramadan, may we become as passionate about the spiritual needs of humankind as well. May Allah bless us all in the Glorious Quran and may He let us benefit by the signs and wise remembrance. Verily Allah the Almighty is Generous, King, Most Kind, Compassionate, and Merciful. ■

## Learning and Disseminating the True Message of the Quran

Jummah Khutba (Sermon) from June 18, 1948

By Maulana Muhammad Ali

(Translated by Dr. Mohammed Ahmad)

[This article is an abridged version of a Jummah Khutba (Friday Congregational Prayer Sermon) delivered by Maulana Muhammad Ali on June 18, 1948, which was translated from Urdu into English by Dr. Mohammed Ahmad. In this Khutba, delivered shortly after the creation of Pakistan, Maulana Muhammad Ali calls attention to the real basis of success for a nation. He explains that long-term progress is dependent on following the divine lessons contained in the Holy Quran and the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. In doing so, he reminds the Lahore Ahmadiyya community of the true objective for which Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad created the Ahmadiyya Movement – that is, to disseminate the true message of the Quran to the world.]

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. (1:1)

Today, I want to remind my friends of the purpose for which our organization was created and the path its members need to follow in order to satisfy it. It is neither you nor I who formed this organization. It was created by a man who was given exceptional knowledge and insight by Allah, the Most High, and who was divinely appointed for the reformation of Muslims. The task of spiritual reformation is very difficult. People fear that by engaging in this work they will fail in their worldly pursuits. It is easy to draw people's attention to material pursuits, such as acquiring power and wealth. This desire for material gain is universal and not confined to Muslims. If two or three sovereign Muslim states are formed, there are independent non-Muslim states that also emerge alongside. India, Burma and Ceylon are current examples of this. Each of these nations can also strive for power and wealth and make the necessary sacrifices to achieve this goal. The Reformer (*Mujaddid*) of the age, however, focused his attention in a different direction.

### Success is not dependent on worldly power

People frequently asked: "What is this idea of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib? His call for teaching and propagating Islam is only feasible if we become a sovereign nation." This was a common objection raised at the time. Many highly esteemed individuals argued that

propagation of religion was not possible in the present state of bondage. Only after gaining freedom, they said, will we become capable of propagating Islam. Now observe the current condition: after gaining independence even less attention is being given towards propagating the Word of God. Truly, Allah, the Most High, had given Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad special insight into this matter.

There have been many Islamic States in the past, some of which were exemplary in their splendor and might and their hold on power extended from the East to the West. In some countries, Muslims were rulers even though they were in the minority. What needs to be examined is why they lost power. It was because of their moral decadence and breaking of covenants with God. Even now, if we do not uphold these covenants, mere acquisition of worldly power can be of no benefit. Today, no doubt, Pakistan is a large independent Muslim state that has been created. If, however, the Muslims believe they can maintain their sovereignty without firmly adhering to their covenants to God, they will be belying the lessons of history. In this Indian sub-continent, the grand Mughal Empire that was very powerful and did not lack military strength faded into the dust bin of history. The State of Pakistan pales in comparison to their might and glory.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad focused his attention on the task of moral reformation in order to make Muslims capable of good governance. Although this is very difficult to do, one appointed by God is not deterred by such obstacles.

### Spiritual reformation is integral to real success

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was given the mantle of reformation for not only the Arabs but also the entire world. He received offers from the Arab tribes to make him their king. "Where can we find a king of such high moral caliber," they asked. They called him *Al-Amin* (the Truthful) and the whole of Arabia respected him. "If you want wealth or wish the hand of the most beautiful woman in Arabia, we can provide it for you," they said. His reply to them was, "I want none of this. All I want is for you to reform yourselves."

In this age, this notion of the need for spiritual reformation among Muslims was solely advanced by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. In verses of his Persian poetry, we see the appearance of such sentiments:

*Whatever Muslims received in the past, was because of their support of religion.*

*They became servants of God, and He opened all the paths for their progress.*

If success is to be had again, it will come only through this path and none other. No progress or empowerment can be sustained until the covenants that the Holy Prophet Muhammad established for us are renewed.

### **Love for the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet**

At this time, I want to draw your attention towards the notions of love for the Holy Quran and the passion to serve it. Both these sentiments were instilled to an utmost degree in the Reformer (*Mujaddid*) of this age. All those who sat in his company were inspired by him. You can examine all his writings and see for yourself his overwhelming love for the Holy Quran. He would always advise those who came in contact with him to firmly hold on to the teachings of the Holy Quran in order to succeed. Mere advice, however, does not bring about results. It was his faith, love and dedication to serve the Word of God that motivated those who kept his company.

Love for the Holy Quran had penetrated his soul to such an extent that those who sat in his company were imbued with it. It gradually became a part of the character of all who followed him. The masses, however, fail to appreciate the source of these persons' love for the Holy Quran. Jesus said that a tree is recognized by its fruit. Arguing about the truthfulness of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and raising objections against him is due to lack of thoughtful consideration. The person whose love for the Quran is a source of inspiration for hundreds of thousands of people is sufficient proof of his truthfulness.

There are many organizations before us today. Some are political, while others are religious. Show me one organization whose members were imbued with such love for the Holy Quran by sitting in the company of its founder. Only Hazrat Mirza Sahib inspired a profound love and passion to propagate the word of the Holy Quran in his companions. It was due to his spiritual excellence that all who kept his company became ardent lovers of the Holy Quran. He was given knowledge by Allah that the truth of the Holy Quran will ultimately prevail. Thus, it is only that organization which chooses the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad as its guide that will succeed.

All Muslims claim to have great love for Holy Prophet Muhammad, and perhaps it lies hidden somewhere in the recesses of their hearts. I will however inform you of one way to assess a person's love: the standard for this love is the sacrifice one makes for it. You can assess for yourself which organization makes sacrifices for propagating Islam and the Holy Quran.

Muslims claim that they love the Holy Prophet Muhammad and the Holy Quran. Although, sacrifice

has only been made by the followers of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in this regard. This is supported by evidence of time and history. Tell me, who generated love of the Holy Quran in your hearts? It was such a passion that those inspired by him did not for a moment think whether people will accept the Holy Quran or not. Their faith was firm, and they were certain that the message of the Holy Quran would prevail. That is what motivated them to ardently carry the message of the Holy Quran all over the world. This faith was inspired in them by the love that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had for the Holy Quran. If we fill a cup with water, adding more water to it will certainly make it overflow. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's faith was so strong it overflowed from his person to quench the spiritual thirst of others.

### **Be an inspiration for others**

Whether it was Khawaja Kamal-ud-Din, Basharat Ahmad, Sadr-ud-Din or other elders, we were all inspired with love of the Holy Quran by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The two groups of his followers (the Qadian and Lahore sections of the Ahmadiyya Movement) are now far apart from each other. One regards Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet, while the other calls him a *mujaddid* (reformer). They (the Qadian section) consider all the other Muslims as disbelievers (*kafir*) while we (the Lahore section) regard anybody who recites the *Kalima* (declaration that there is nothing deserving to be worshipped besides Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah) to be Muslim. Both groups however have one trait in common: it is love for the Holy Quran and passion for making sacrifices for the sake of religion. It is only these two organizations that are sacrificing for the cause of religion. Many have tried to emulate them, but true love cannot be inspired by mere mimicry. No others have been able to generate this true spirit of sacrifice.

I want to draw your attention to this passion for love of the Holy Quran that has been implanted in your hearts by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Make it grow so that it overflows and inspires others. Those who sit in your company should also be inspired by this passion. Remember, unless you are familiar with the beauty of an object you cannot fall in love with it or develop a passion for it. Muslims do not fall in love with the Holy Quran because its beauty is hidden from their eyes. The other day someone asked a friend of his to read the Holy Quran. The friend's reply was that he does not know any Muslim who does not recite the Holy Quran. Of what benefit is recitation that does not affect the heart of a person? It is useless. Our organization is distinguished only by its love for the Holy Quran and we should maintain this hallmark. Not only should we nurture this love

ourselves, we should foster it in the hearts of our children. It should be of such intensity that it produces even in those who keep our company an attraction to it so that this love for the Holy Quran then permeates their souls as well.

### Focus on the higher goal of life

There are many things that occupy our daily lives. In truth, we have become so engrossed in our material pursuits that there is no time to spare. Most of our time is occupied by recreational activities, cinema, sports, etc. In addition, we have our worldly occupations and the incessant desire to earn more wealth. Is our earthly sojourn only meant for this purpose? A poet quite appropriately said:

*Life is not meant for eating.  
Eating is only to sustain life.*

The purpose of life is far above the mundane pursuits of eating and drinking. I exhort you to pay attention to this higher purpose.

I urge you to find time to attend the Quranic teaching classes that I have recently initiated. All members should take advantage to benefit from this opportunity. My intent is not to simply teach. I also want to assess your knowledge and see how much you can learn. If you make a habit of studying four or five verses every day, you will be able to study three or four sections in a week. You must have a translation of the Holy Quran in your home to help you understand its meaning.

But remember, knowledge of the Holy Quran cannot just be acquired by studying it. God has such a connection with the human soul, whosoever turns to Him, the doors of understanding the Word of God are automatically opened for him. Hazrat Mirza Sahib did not write a complete commentary of the Holy Quran for us. He only commented on some verses of the Holy Quran in his writings. What he did was to show us the manner in which to interpret the Holy Quran, thereby opening the door of knowledge of the Holy Quran for us. It is now our duty to benefit from this.

Our friend, Maulavi Azizuddin (Second Master, Muslim High School), told me that when he went to Makkah, he witnessed an Indian religious scholar giving lessons from the Holy Quran. The scholar told Maulvi Azizuddin that he used the *Bayan al Quran* as the text for these classes. I also witnessed in the State of Hyderabad people using the *Bayan al Quran* for this purpose. This is an example of how you (members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat) have provided guidance to people and enhanced their knowledge. I advise you to try to work even harder in this way, as this work is never ending.

### The real source of pleasure in life

No one should think that he or she is not capable of benefiting others. God has given every human being the capability to provide benefit to others if he or she wills. Allah, the Most High, clearly states in the Holy Quran:

*And those who strive hard for Us, We shall certainly guide them in Our ways. And Allah is surely with the doers of good. (29:69)*

We should try to study the Quran ourselves and also teach it to our families. It is my personal experience that the development of love for the Holy Quran is what brings true pleasure to life.

This worldly life is devoid of real pleasure. One must face difficulties and hardships and many unfavorable circumstances. Love for the Holy Quran, however, makes this existence pleasurable and gives you immense joy. None of us who sacrificed their worldly interests to serve the Holy Quran ever had any regrets. We all feel a pleasure in our lives and appreciate this excellent path we chose under the guidance of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

### The obstacle of provincial prejudices

Although Muslims have now been given Pakistan, it cannot be sustained without being united. Prejudices amongst Muslims are so rampant. Before, there was sectarian strife and infighting over minor differences. These prejudices, though, were not resolved with the creation of Pakistan. Now, in addition to sectarianism, the scourge of provincialism has arisen. Is resolving the sectarian divide amongst Muslims and creating the strong bond of unity between them a minor task that you have been given? This task can only be achieved by means of the Holy Quran. Islam arose to establish a universal brotherhood. It was able to create an environment in which a black slave could sit at the same table as his white master, bonded in brotherhood.

Those who call themselves Muslims today, desire for only the Sindhis to remain in Sindh, the Balochis in Balochistan and the Punjabis in the Punjab. These are not good indications for the nation's long-term survival. If they understood the real teachings of Islam, they would know that at one time the Muslims did not even differentiate between the Black man, the Chinese or the White Arab. The Holy Prophet said that if a black man is appointed as a leader, the Arabs must follow him. Even the opponents admit universal brotherhood can only be brought about through Islam. Do not disgrace this magnificent spirit of brotherhood! There are many tasks to be accomplished. Everyone can individually partake in these. Each one of you can be a source of guidance for others. ■

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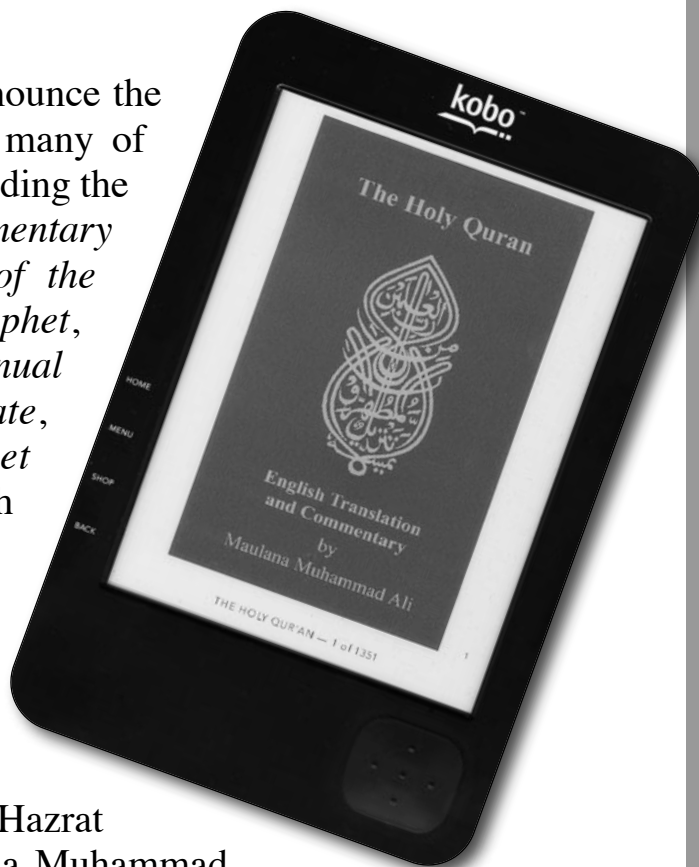
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