

“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 – March 2013

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. 90

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احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

◆ Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc., U.S.A. ◆  
P.O. Box 3370, Dublin, Ohio 43016, U.S.A.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### About ourselves

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

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

### Achievements:

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

### History:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Spiritual Development in Islam

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

*[This article comprises part of the material presented by the Editor to inmates in correction institutions throughout central Ohio who are participants in the Horizon Prison Initiative (a nonprofit organization of which the Editor is also a board member). The lecture presentation is accompanied with powerpoint slides and short video clips. In addition to the presentation, group exercises are conducted in which the participants are provided a variety of fact patterns containing moral dilemmas, and then discussions in small groups ensue about the various considerations that are raised in resolving them. The presentation along with the group exercise aims at laying a foundation for appreciating that moral/spiritual development is not easily attained and rather requires constant struggle with one's conscience in everyday challenging situations.]*

### The Objective of Islam

To start, what does the word Islam mean? The word "Islam" is derived from the Arabic word "silm", meaning "peace". So, the religion is neither named after its founder nor the place from which it originated, as is the case with other faiths, but rather is titled after the **objective** to which it aspires. The attainment of peace – within the individual, amongst people, and between man and God – is the lofty goal Islam prescribes as the very purpose of life. "Peace", therefore, is the very essence of the faith. As the Quran (the holy scripture of Islam) states:

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

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

### Peace Achieved Through Development of Soul

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

Then He (God) made him (i.e. man) complete and breathed into him of His spirit ... (32:9)

The *Spirit of God* within man means that the divine attributes of God exist within each of us. And it is through the doing of good works that these attributes may be developed. The soul, therefore, is like a *seed*, with the potential of growing into a garden (the spiritual garden of heaven) if nourished and developed properly. So, in Islam, religion is not supposed to be treated as a dogma which man must accept to achieve salvation in the next life. Rather, the primary concern is with

bringing about peace in this life, so that one may attain closeness to God. And the Quran illustrates this in the following verse:

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

This is salvation in Islam! It is a spiritual journey to attain closeness to God by developing the divine attributes within one's self through the doing of good works. The Holy Quran refers to the person who has achieved this state of total peace as the "**soul at rest**":

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

### God and His Attributes

Now, if, as I had said, the development of the soul is the objective of life, and the soul is in fact the spirit of God, there is an obvious need to understand what God is. According to Islam, there is only One God, Who has no associate or companion. This monotheistic belief is the very foundation of the Islamic faith. Interestingly, the Quran acknowledges **Abraham** as the archetype of this monotheistic faith. Abraham is repeatedly pointed out as comprehending that the True, Supreme, All-Powerful, Perfect God is One, and that it is to this One God that man is to submit himself completely. And it is this Abrahamic model of faith that Islam endeavors to reestablish:

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

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

As for me, my Lord has guided me to the right path — **a right religion, the faith of Abraham**,

the upright one, and he (Abraham) was not of the polytheists (6:161).

So, the God of Islam is the God of Abraham, the same God Jews and Christians worship. And the name of God in the Quran is “**Allah**”.

“Allah”, normally translated simply as “God”, is literally defined as: “that Being possessing all the perfect attributes”. In fact, the Quran provides 99 attributes (or names) of God. These attributes help us discern the nature of God and, because our souls is the essence of God within us, help us understand how to develop ourselves spiritually

In the first Chapter of the Quran, titled Al-Fatiha (or “The Opening”), the four principle/primary attributes of God are introduced:

We are told that God is “**Rabb ul Al amin**”, normally translated at “Lord of the Worlds”, but has a much deeper significance. It means that God is not only the Creator of everything, but also the Provider and Nourisher and Sustainer for all. It connotes that everything is dependent on God and it is through God’s love for His creation that everything continues to exist and progresses.

We are told that God is “**Rahman**”, normally translated as “Beneficent”, but really means that God has so much love for His creation that He provides his blessings to all, no matter how unmerited or undeserved. Whether it is the sun, air, soil, water, God provides for His creation without man having done anything first to deserve it. And just as God provides for our physical/material welfare, so too does He provide for our spiritual development through the raising of prophets and revealing of scriptures throughout the ages.

We are told that God is “**Raheem**”, normally translated as “Merciful”, but really means that when one makes use of what God provides, God rewards that doing of good abundantly, manifold times over. For instance, when one makes use of the sun, soil, water and seeds by cultivating a field, he is rewarded with crops, which becomes a source for his physical development. Likewise, when one makes use of the guidance provided by God as contained in scriptures and through the teachings of the prophets and messengers of God, man is rewarded with the spiritual fruits of peace and contentment by becoming close to God.

And we are told God is “**Malik**”, which means He is the “True Master of Judgment” in that punishment is always for the purpose of reformation of

the individual and never on account of anger for wrongdoing. Can anyone imagine a mother allowing a knife to be placed on her infant child? But what if the knife was in the hands of a doctor who intends to operate on the child so as to cure it of disease or malady? In the same way, what we may sometimes view as punishment is merely trials that God has place in our lives so that we may have an opportunity to recognize our wrongdoing (our spiritual diseases) and be guided to the right path.

The consistent theme, therefore, is that God is a loving, nurturing force that provides for all and rewards those who make benefit of what He provides and judges out of mercy for the purpose of bringing those who may be going astray to the right path.

### Stages of Spiritual Development

Now, these attributes of God – being Merciful, Compassionate, Forgiving, Just, Patient, etc. – are all inherent within us. Starting off in a latent form, they are developed when one applies them in daily life situations. Just as with our physical bodies, we have muscles, and they don’t necessarily grow or develop without exercising them. So too must our spiritual qualities be exercised in order for them to develop.

And in this process of developing the divine attributes within us, there are *Three (3) stages of progress of the soul*.

- The first stage of the soul is called “**Nafs al Ammara**”. It is referred to as the “**animal stage**” and is described as the stage of the “uncontrollable spirit” or the “spirit prone to evil”.

The Quran describes this 1st stage in the following manner: “*Surely (man’s) self is wont to command (him to do) evil*”. So, the primary characteristic of this stage is being prone to wrongdoing and being inclined to transgression.

It is when one’s “natural desires” (those passions and instincts that are inherent in us and provide for our species to evolve) are dominant in one’s actions and are not controlled. These natural desires are for wealth, power and sexual relations, and are the driving forces of the animal kingdom. And in this stage, man is unable to control these desires and, in essence, is not different from other animals in the spiritual sense.

- The second stage of the soul is called “**Nafs al Allawwama**”. It is referred to as the “**moral stage**” and is described as the stage in which one “rejects unbridled passions” and “struggles to generate higher moral values”.

The Quran describes this second stage in the following manner: “*Nay I swear by the self-accusing spirit*” (75:2). Hence it is when one’s conscience creates a conflict between doing what may seem natural and doing what one believes to be right; an internal struggle results, where one’s spiritual essence calls into question one’s physical/material impulse.

This stage is characterized as a constant struggle, almost like a child that is trying to walk, but stumbles, and gets up and keeps trying.

- The third stage of the soul is called “**Nafs al Mutamainna**”. It is referred to as the stage of “**the soul at rest**” and is described as the “spiritual stage” in which one is free from all weaknesses and frailties and has complete control over one’s passions and desires.

As mentioned earlier, the Quran describes this stage in the following manner: “*O Soul that art at rest, return to thy Lord well pleased, well pleasing, so enter among My servants and enter My garden*” (89:27:30). As is suggested, this is the stage when one finds perfect union with God.

In this stage, man masters his low desires and displays the divine attributes in all of his dealings. He treats his fellow man as a mother does her own child, having love for all, seeking everyone’s betterment, without expecting anything in return.

In this stage, the prayers, acts of worship and devotion which may have seemed burdensome before are now realized to be nourishment for the soul and the basis for spiritual development. The qualities of reason and logic that are dominant in the “moral stage” are now replaced with a strong bond and connection with the Divine. And this is the stage that prophets and other saintly figures are able to reach.

### **Key: Right Conditions / Appropriate Circumstances**

Now, the key to development of divine attributes is exhibiting them under the right conditions and for the appropriate reasons. And what do I mean by that? Well, certain conditions are sometimes necessary in order to truly display a certain attribute.

Let’s take the attribute of “forgiveness” as an example. It is only when one is in the position to hold another accountable for some wrongdoing against him can we say he has a real opportunity to exemplify the attribute of forgiveness. Think about it: can we truly say that a slave has forgiven a tyrant, when, because of the dire condition the slave is in, he has no option to do otherwise?

Moreover, simply forgiving *all kinds* of wrongdoing cannot be said to be a moral quality, especially if justice and fairness require the holding to account of a wrongdoer. Imagine how you would feel if you reported a theft committed against you and the authorities said: “yes, this person is guilty but we’ve decided to simply forgive him, so tough luck”. So, the point is that the reason for forgiving must be for the betterment of the situation, not for creating injustice or possibly encouraging further wrongdoing.

And it is these considerations of *proper conditions* and *appropriate reasons* that determine when something is a moral attribute and when it is not. And struggling with these considerations is the basis for moral development and a prerequisite to attainment of the stage of being at complete peace. And examples of these considerations are what will be discussed in the group exercises. ■

## **Islam and War**

### ***Analysis and Commentary of Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut’s treatise, “Quran and Fighting”***

**By Justin Elias**

[This article was originally posted by Justin Elias on the online forum “The Saracen Sentinel” in 2010. In this article, the author summarizes, analyzes and comments on Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut’s treatise “Quran and Fighting”. Shaykh Shaltut is the former rector of the prestigious Al Azhar Al Shareef University in Cairo Egypt. In his treatise, Shaykh Shaltut surveys the verses of the Holy Quran that pertain to warfare and presents an authoritative and compelling assessment of permissible/justifiable war according to Islam. Shaykh Mahmud’s scholarship and spiritual insight is abundantly apparent in his writings and discourses, and Justin Elias has beautifully encapsulated these features in this article while adding valuable points of his own concerning this important topic.]

*In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*

*Peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad, his family, and his followers altogether.*

The teachings of Islam on war have been misconstrued by both opponents of Islam and extremist Muslims. To clarify common misconceptions, an authoritative explanation of Islamic teachings about war was published by Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut in 1948. Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut served as Shaykh al-Azhar, the rector of Al-Azhar University, the Sunni Islamic community’s premier academic institution. He was a prolific author on

many Islamic topics, especially Islamic law and the interpretation of the Qur'an.

His treatise "Quran and Fighting" was translated into English by Rudolph Peters and published in 1996 as part of the compilation, "Jihad in classical and modern Islam." Peters notes that Shaykh Shaltut's explanation of Jihad expresses peace as the normative relationship between nations and is representative of the vast majority of mainstream established Islamic universities throughout the world.

The following is an analysis of Shaykh Shaltut's explanation with additional commentary for the purpose of instructing Muslims in the correct understanding of this important Islamic teaching.

### The Exemplary Method of Quran Interpretation

In this section, the Shaykh discusses two methods of Quran interpretation. The first method, which was widely practiced in the classical period, interprets each verse one by one in their traditional order. The Shaykh criticizes this method, claiming it obscures the divine guidance and often explains verses contrary to their intended meaning. For this reason, many commentators of the past wrongly claimed numerous peaceful verses of the Quran were abrogated when they had no proof to say so. He says some commentators applied the doctrine of abrogation so haphazardly that it "created an intellectual anarchy and an aversion to the Quran and its interpreters."

The second method, supported by the Shaykh, involves bringing together all the different verses on a given topic and analyzing how they relate to each other. By doing so, he shows that the wisdom of the Quran's teaching about war is found in "its desire for peace and its aversion against bloodshed and killing for the sake of the vanities of this world and out of sheer greediness or lust."

I say; this second method is the correct way to understand the Quran. The first principle of interpreting the Quran is that the Quran explains itself. Verses in one place will explain those in another. By viewing verses in isolation, extremists of both the Muslim and anti-Muslim camps are able to construct a false picture of the Quran's message. It opens the door for anyone to abrogate verses they do not wish to follow, thus resembling those who said, "Bring us a different Qur'an, or change it." (10:15). In contrast, by harmonizing between the different verses of the Quran, the believers will resemble those who said, "We believe in it. It is all from our Lord." (3:7).

### The Nature of the Islamic Mission

In this section, the Shaykh demonstrates that Islam has forbidden religious conversion by force and instead encourages human beings to accept Islam on the basis

of reasoned arguments. Islam, the religion of nature and nature's God, is clear, self-evident, and easy to understand. Therefore, to force others into Islam "would be an insult to it, would make it revolting, and would put obstacles in its way." He further explains, "The Quran instructs us clearly that God did not wish people to become believers by way of force and compulsion, but only by way of study, reflection, and contemplation." To prove this point he cites the following verses.

*Had your Lord willed, all the people on earth would have believed. So can you [Prophet] compel people to believe? (10:99)*

*If your Lord had pleased, He would have made all people a single community, but they continue to have their differences... (11:118)*

*If you find rejection by the disbelievers so hard to bear, then seek a tunnel into the ground or a ladder into the sky, if you can, and bring them a sign: God could bring them all to guidance if it were His will, so do not join the ignorant. (6:35)*

Next, the Shaykh points to the stories of the Prophets in the Quran. Each Prophet is shown to have called his people to Islam not by compulsion but rather with beautiful preaching and reasoned arguments. He cites the example of Noah:

*He said, 'My people, think: if I did have a clear sign from my Lord, and He had given me grace of His own, though it was hidden from you, could we force you to accept it against your will? (11:28)*

Then he cites the example of Abraham when he called his father to Islam using reason. Abraham said:

*Father, knowledge that has not reached you has come to me, so follow me: I will guide you to an even path. Father, do not worship Satan—Satan has rebelled against the Lord of Mercy. Father, I fear that a punishment from the Lord of Mercy may afflict you and that you may become Satan's companion [in Hell]. His father answered, 'Abraham, do you reject my gods? I will stone you if you do not stop this. Keep out of my way!' Abraham said, 'Peace be with you: I will beg my Lord to forgive you—He is always gracious to me. (19:43-47)*

The Shaykh says that the method of beautiful preaching and reasoned argument is the basic rule Prophet Muhammad and his companions used to spread Islam. He cites the following verse:

*Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching. Argue with them in the most courteous way, for your Lord knows best who has*

*strayed from His way and who is rightly guided.* (16:125)

*Say, "This is my way: based on clear evidence, I, and all who follow me, call to God—glory be to God!—I do not join others with Him."* (12:108)

The Shaykh cites more verses to prove this point:

*There is no compulsion in religion: true guidance has become distinct from error; so whoever rejects false gods and believes in God has grasped the firmest hand-hold, one that will never break. God is all hearing and all knowing.* (2:256)

*This is a message for all people; for those who wish to take the straight path.* (81:27-28)

*So warn them: your only task is to give warning, you are not there to control them.* (88:21-22)

I will add the following verses as additional proof:

*The messenger's only duty is to give clear warning.* (29:18)

*We know best what the disbelievers say. You [Prophet] are not there to force them, so remind, with this Qur'an, those who fear My warning.* (50:45)

The Shaykh notes that this message is consistent throughout the Medinan chapters as well:

*Say, 'Obey God; obey the Messenger. If you turn away, [know that] he is responsible for the duty placed upon him, and you are responsible for the duty placed upon you. If you obey him, you will be rightly guided, but the Messenger's duty is only to deliver the message clearly.'* (24:54)

Finally, the Shaykh summarizes this section with the following points:

In the nature of the Islamic mission there is no complexity, obscurity, or unintelligibility that would require the use of manifest or secret compulsion.

The Islamic legislation, on the strength of the Book of God, is not in conflict with God's principle of creation, which accounts for the fact that some people believe whereas others do not. This principle consists in leaving people free to choose for themselves the basis of examination and conviction.

The Islamic legislation, on the strength of the Book of God, rejects in plain and unambiguous words the use of compulsion as a means to propagate religion.

The Prophet of Islam was responsible towards his Lord only in so far as his missionary task was concerned. This task has been expounded in both the

Meccan and Medinan parts of the Quran. It consisted in communicating the mission and admonition. He was not responsible for the conversion of people which might have induced compulsion and the use of force.

The Book of God, the source of the Islamic mission, does not respect faith brought about by compulsion, and it denies its having any consequence on the Day of Resurrection. How then can it enjoin compulsion or allow the use of it as a means to conversion?

Therefore, religious freedom is paramount in Islam because God can only be truly worshipped by people who freely choose Him. After establishing this important principle, the Shaykh moves on to discuss the consistency of this principle with the verses of fighting.

### Understanding the Verses of Fighting

The Shaykh provides the context of the verses that discuss fighting non-Muslims, "In Mecca, the Muslims suffered for several years under the worst kinds of punishment, oppressed in their religious freedom, persecuted for the sake of the creed in which they found reassurance and terrorized with regard to their property and personal safety. For all these reasons they were compelled to emigrate. They left their dwellings and settled in Medina, patiently submitting to God's orders and gladly accepting His authority."

He notes that the Muslims at first were forbidden to fight against their oppressors and the Prophet used to hold them back, saying, "I have not been ordered to fight." Finally, in Medina, the following verses were revealed giving the Muslims permission to defend themselves:

*God will defend the believers; God does not love the unfaithful or the ungrateful. Those who have been attacked are permitted to take up arms because they have been wronged—God has the power to help them—those who have been driven unjustly from their homes only for saying, 'Our Lord is God.' If God did not repel some people by means of others, many monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, where God's name is much invoked, would have been destroyed. God is sure to help those who help His cause—God is strong and—those who, when We establish them in the land, keep up the prayer, pay the prescribed alms, command what is right, and forbid what is wrong: God controls the outcome of all events.* (22:38-41)

The Shaykh explains, "This permission (to fight) was motivated by the fact that the Muslims suffered injustice and were forced to emigrate and to leave their dwellings without justification."

I say; these verses begin with God's promise to "defend" the believers, indicating that what is discussed here is the law of self-defense. The right of self-defense is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 12:

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

The Shaykh points out that the right of self-defense belong not only to Muslims but to all people, as mentioned in the verse, "*If God did not repel some people by means of others, many monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, where God's name is much invoked, would have been destroyed.*" As such, Jews, Christians, and other people have the right to defend themselves if Muslims transgress by unlawfully attacking them.

The next verses discussed by the Shaykh are the following:

*Fight in God's cause against those who fight you, but do not transgress: God does not love those who transgress. Kill them wherever you encounter them, and drive them out from where they drove you out, for persecution is more serious than killing. Do not fight them at the Sacred Mosque unless they fight you there. If they do fight you, kill them—this is what such disbelievers deserve—but if they stop, then God is most forgiving and merciful. Fight them until there is no more persecution, and worship is devoted to God. If they cease hostilities, there can be no [further] hostility except towards aggressors. A sacred month for a sacred month: violation of sanctity [calls for] fair retribution. So if anyone commits aggression against you, attack him as he attacked you, but be mindful of God, and know that He is with those who are mindful of Him. (2:190-194)*

About these verses the Shaykh says, "They prohibit the provocation of hostility and this prohibition is reinforced by God's repugnance of aggression and by his dislike of those who provoke hostility. Then they point out that expelling people from their homes, frightening them while they are safe, and preventing them from living peacefully without fear for their lives or possessions is persecution worse than persecution by means of murder and bloodshed."

I say; this is how the verse was understood by the companions of the Prophet, the earliest Muslims, and popular classical authorities of Islam, as shown by the following reports:

Ibn Abbas said: "Do not kill women, children, old men, or anyone who meets you with peace restraining his hand from fighting. If you did that, then indeed you would have committed transgression." [Tafsir al-Tabari, verse 2:190]

Al-Hasan Al-Basri said that transgression, "includes mutilating the dead, theft, killing women, children and old people who do not participate in warfare, killing priests and residents of houses of worship, burning down trees and killing animals without real benefit." [Tafsir Ibn Kathir, verse 2:190]

Some opponents of Islam cite the phrase, "*Fight them until there is no more persecution, and worship is devoted to God,*" also repeated in verse 8:39, as a prescription for conquest, but as the Shaykh makes clear, this verse was revealed "so that people obtain religious freedom and are not oppressed or tortured because of their religion." This is proven by the phrase immediately following it, "*If they cease hostilities, there can be no [further] hostility except towards aggressors.*"

The Shaykh reminds us, "In these verses and the principle they contain with regard to the reason and aim of fighting, there is not a single trace to be found of any idea of conversion by force. On the contrary, these verses, like the previous ones, say in plain and distinct words that the reason for which Muslims have been ordered to fight is the aggression directed against them, expulsion from their dwellings, violation of God's sacred institutions, and attempts to persecute people for what they believe. At the same time they say that the aim upon the attainment of which Muslims must cease fighting is the termination of aggression and establishment of religious freedom devoted to God and free from any pressure or force."

The Shaykh cites more verses that confirm this basic principle:

*Why should you not fight in God's cause and for those oppressed men, women, and children who cry out, 'Lord, rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors! By Your grace, give us a protector and give us a helper!?' (4:75)*

*But as for those who seek refuge with people with whom you have a treaty, or who come over to you because their hearts shrink from fighting against you or against their own people, God could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you. So if they withdraw and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then God gives you no way against them. You will find others who wish to be safe from you, and from their own people, but whenever they are back in a situation where they*

*are tempted [to fight you], they succumb to it. So if they neither withdraw, nor offer you peace, nor restrain themselves from fighting you, seize and kill them wherever you encounter them: We give you clear authority against such people. (4:90-91)*

If one reads these verses carefully, the Shaykh says, “then you will realize that these verses were revealed with regard to people lawlessly practicing persecution, amongst whom the elements of depravation were so deeply rooted that they did not respect pledges anymore and that virtue became meaningless to them. There is no doubt that to fight these people, to purify the earth from them, and to put an end to their persecution is to serve the commonwealth and benefaction of mankind as a whole.”

Finally, the Shaykh explains two verses which are commonly misunderstood. In these examples, we see the importance of interpreting the Quran as a complete book rather than interpreting verses in isolation.

The first verse reads:

*Fight those of the People of the Book who do not [truly] believe in God and the Last Day, who do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden, who do not obey the rule of justice, until they pay the tax and agree to submit. (9:29)*

The Shaykh points out that this chapter previously stated that those groups mentioned here are aggressors, namely the Byzantine Romans, who did not honor peace treaties with the Muslims:

*But if they break their oath after having made an agreement with you, if they revile your religion, then fight the leaders of disbelief—oaths mean nothing to them—so that they may stop. How could you not fight a people who have broken their oaths, who tried to drive the Messenger out, who attacked you first? Do you fear them? It is God you should fear if you are true believers. (9:12-13)*

Therefore, he says, “this verse does not say that the quality of being a disbeliever constitutes a sufficient reason for fighting them.” I add; this has always been the majority position of the four orthodox Sunni schools of law:

Among the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence only one, the Shafi‘ee school, contains the view that a person’s belief can be a reason for fighting against them. This view, however, is mitigated by the fact that an opposite view, in agreement with the majority, is also attributed to Shafi‘ee. [Jihad and the Islamic Law of War, Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, p. 36]

The prescribed tax was the method used to pacify opponents subdued in war or to ally with those who wished to be protected by the Muslim armies. The Shaykh explains, “The poll-tax is not as some people think, a sum paid in return for the right to refuse conversion to Islam or in return for their lives. It is, as we have said, a symbol of their submission (to the law) and for their desistance from fighting and impeding the Islamic mission, and a token of their participation in the affairs of the state, which grants them protection of their lives and properties.”

He proves this by citing Hanafi scholar Abu Yusuf in his Book of Taxes (*Kitab al-Kharaj*):

“After Abu Ubayda had concluded a peace treaty with the people of Syria and had collected the poll-tax and land-tax from them, he was informed that the Romans were raising troops against him and that the situation had become critical for him and the Muslims. He then wrote to the governors of those cities with which he had concluded a treaty that they must return the poll-tax and land-tax they had collected and say to them: We return to you your property since we have been informed that troops are being raised against us. You have stipulated that we should protect you, whereas we are now unable to do so. We now return what we have taken from you, but we will abide by the stipulation and what has been written down, if God grants us victory over them.”

In this example, the Muslim leader returned the taxes he collected when he discovered he was no longer able to protect the people of Syria from the Byzantine Romans. So rather than an instrument of theft or oppression, this tax was intended to be a fair contractual relationship that Muslims were obligated to honor. In this respect, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz said, “God did not send Muhammad as a tax collector, but rather as a guide for humanity.”

The second misunderstood verse reads:

*You who believe, fight the disbelievers near you and let them find you standing firm: be aware that God is with those who are mindful of Him. (9:123)*

The Shaykh points out that previous verses clearly determined the reason and aim of fighting. Having been established then, this verse discusses a practical battle plan for defending against aggression already underway. The command is to fight the hostile enemies nearest to the Muslims so that the road can be cleared for use by common people. In this case, the disbelievers refer to “those hostile polytheists who fight the Muslims, commit aggression against them, expel them from their homes and property and persecute them because of their religion.”

The Shaykh concludes this section with the following points:

That there is not a single verse in the Quran which could support the opinion that the aim of fighting in Islam is conversion.

That there are only three reasons for fighting: to stop aggression, to protect the mission of Islam, and to defend religious freedom.

That in giving its prescriptions for fighting, the Quran did not allow greed, selfishness, and humiliation of the poor as motives for it, but intended it as an instrument for peace and tranquility and for a life founded on justice and equality.

That the poll-tax is not a financial compensation for the granting of one's life or preservation of one's own religion, but a symbol of submission (to the law) and desistance from harmful acts and a contribution in carrying the burdens of the state.

#### **Islamic Charter on Relations with Non-Muslims**

The Shaykh reinforces his conclusions with what he describes as the "Islamic charter concerning the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims." This is the following verse:

*God may still bring about affection between you and your present enemies—God is all powerful, God is most forgiving and merciful—and He does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with anyone who has not fought you for your faith or driven you out of your homes: God loves the just. But God forbids you to take as allies those who have fought against you for your faith, driven you out of your homes, and helped others to drive you out: any of you who take them as allies will truly be wrongdoers. (60:7-9)*

I say; this verse clearly distinguishes between aggressive and peaceful non-Muslims. The reason these verses were revealed was to make this distinction, as recorded in the authentic tradition:

Narrated Asma bint Abu Bakr: My mother came to me hoping (for my favor) during the lifetime of the Prophet. I asked the Prophet, "May I treat her kindly?" He replied, "Yes." Ibn Uyaina said, "Then God revealed: *He does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with anyone who has not fought you for your faith or driven you out of your homes...*" (60.8) [Sahih Bukhari, Book 73 Number 9]

Although Mecca and Medina were not on friendly terms at the time, the Prophet gave Asma bint Abu Bakr permission to treat her polytheist mother well, knowing

that she was a peaceful woman. She was not in the same category as Abu Jahl or Abu Lahab, who were the leaders of violent oppression against the new Muslim community.

In this way, the Shaykh demonstrates that the verses of forgiveness and the verses of fighting do not contradict each other nor abrogate each other. Rather, they apply to different categories of people; namely, the verses of forgiveness apply in general to all people, whereas the verses of fighting apply only to those who initiate aggression or commit crimes. He explains, "Legislation based upon consideration for different situations, and for different conditions of individuals and groups, a legislation that requires of people that they follow in every situation that which is most suitable, cannot be accused of being inconsistent or of being a legislation of which one part abrogates the other. People with common sense will consider it as a wise and very precise legislation that promotes the interest of those who fall under its authority and will realize its ultimate aim: the happiness of the individual and the community."

#### **The Aim of Peace and Good Will**

I will mention here some additional texts which prove that the aim of fighting in Islam is the establishment of peace and religious freedom. The Holy Quran states:

*But if they incline towards peace, you [Prophet] must also incline towards it, and put your trust in God: He is the All Hearing, the All Knowing. (8:61)*

Ibn Kathir explains this verse by citing the following report:

Narrated Ali: The Prophet said: "After me there will be many differences, so if you have a way to end them in peace, then do it." [Tafsir Ibn Kathir, verse 8:61]

As we can see, the Prophet commanded his close companion Ali, the fourth rightly guided Caliph, to seek a peaceful solution to conflicts whenever possible. This has always been the basic understanding of war in Islam. As Ibn Taymiyyah said,

Islamic warfare is always defensive, because the basis of relationships with non-Muslims is peace. If one reflects deeply on the causes of the Prophet's military expeditions, one will find that all of them were of this type. [Majmu, Volume 8, Section 28]

That war is to be fought only as a last resort is further established by the following report:

Narrated Salim Abu An-Nadr: I was Umar's clerk. Once Abdullah bin Abi Aufa wrote a letter to

Umar when he proceeded to Al-Haruriya. I read in it that God's Messenger, in one of his military expeditions against the enemy, waited until the sun declined and then he got up among the people saying, "O people! Do not wish to meet the enemy, and ask God for safety, but when you face the enemy, be patient, and remember that Paradise is under the shades of swords." Then he said, "O God, the Revealer of the Holy Book, and the Mover of the clouds and the Defeater of the clans, defeat them, and grant us victory over them." [Sahih Bukhari, Book 52 Number 266]

In general, the Prophet taught his companions to spread a climate of love and harmony amongst themselves and others, and that this is done by establishing peaceful relations:

Narrated Abu Hurairah: The Messenger of God said: "By the One in whose Hand is my soul, you will not enter Paradise until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another. Shall I tell you something which if you did you would love each other? Spread peace between yourselves." [Sahih Muslim, Book 1 Number 96]

As such, peace treaties are sacred in Islam. The Prophet warned his companions in the strongest terms that whoever breaks his peace treaty will go to Hell:

Narrated Abdullah bin Amr: The Prophet said: "Whoever killed a person protected by a treaty shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise though its fragrance can be found at a distance of forty years (of traveling)." [Sahih Bukhari, Book 83 Number 49]

Furthermore, the Prophet characterized lawless killing and bloodshed as a rejection of God and His laws:

Narrated Abdullah bin Umar: The Prophet said, "After me, do not become disbelievers by striking the necks of one another." [Sahih Bukhari, Book 83 Number 7]

For all of these reasons, Islamic legal theorists have universally accepted that the objectives of Islamic law (*Maqasid al-Sharia*) are the protection of life, religion, property, family, mind, and honor. Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, one of the most brilliant Muslim thinkers in history, states that, "It is known with certainty that preservation of human life, the faculty of reason, chastity, and material possession are the intent of the Law." [Shifa al-Ghalil]

### Conclusion

Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut has proven that Islam teaches just war theory as an instrument for the maintenance of peace and human rights, specifically the rights of life,

safety, and religious freedom. Islam has forbidden conversion by force and allows war only to repel aggression and injustice. The normative relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is peace and good will, as clearly stated in the Holy Quran. This has been the view of Muslims since the time of Prophet Muhammad until our time today, as demonstrated by Shaykh Shaltut, whose treatise represents the view of Al-Azhar University, the most prestigious academic institution in Sunni Islam. If Muslims ever fail to live up to these ideals, it is because of their inability or unwillingness to support the Islamic mission according to the method of Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet is free from all of those who commit injustice in the name of Islam. ■

Posted By Justin to *The Saracen Sentinel* at 11/20/2010 08:23:00 AM

## Exaltation of Jesus

By Prof. Mahmud Shaltut

[Prof. Mahmud Shaltut was introduced in the previous article concerning justifiable/permissible war in Islam. As was the case in that article, here too Prof. Shaltut displays an authoritative and compelling assessment on the topic concerning Prophet Jesus in the Quran. In particular, a letter was sent to Al Azhar University from one Abdul Karim Khan inquiring about the following two issues: 1) "Is Jesus dead or alive according to the Qur'an and the Holy Traditions of the Holy Prophet?", and 2) "What do you think of a Muslim who does not believe that he [Jesus] is still alive and what about one who disbelieves in him [Jesus] in case he comes to the world for the second time?". It is in response to these two questions that the Senior Professor Sheikh Mahmud Shaltut (a member of the Senate of the Learned Professors) wrote this article, which was originally published in "Al-Risalah", May 11, 1942, Vol. 462, p.515.]

Now, the Qur'an mentions Prophet Jesus in reference to his fate at the hands of his people in three chapters:

In the chapter *The Family of Imran* where it is stated:

"But when Jesus perceived unbelief on their part, he said: 'Who will be my helpers in Allah's way? The disciples said: "We are helpers (in the way) of Allah: We believe in Allah and bear witness that we are submitting ones: Our Lord, we believe in what Thou hast revealed and we follow the Apostle, so write us down with those who bear witness.' And they planned and Allah (also) planned, and Allah is the best of planners. When Allah said : O Jesus! I will cause *you* to die and exalt *you* in My presence and clear you of those

who disbelieve and make those who follow you above those who disbelieve to the day of resurrection; then to Me shall be your return, so I will decide between you concerning that in which you differed” (3:51-54).

In the chapter *The Women* Allah says:

“And their saying: Surely We have killed the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the apostle of Allah: and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but (the matter) was made dubious to them and most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it: they have no knowledge respecting it, but only follow a conjecture, and they *know* it not for sure. Nay: Allah exalted him in His presence and Allah is mighty wise” (4:157-158).

And in the chapter *The Food* says Allah:

“And when Allah will say: O Jesus, son of Mary! did you say to men, take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah? He will say: Glory be to Thee, it did not befit me that I should say what I had no right to (say): If I had said it, Thou wouldst indeed have known it; Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I do not know what is in Thy mind; surely Thou art the great knower of the unseen things. I did not say to them aught save what Thou didst enjoin me with: That serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord; and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die. Thou Overt the watcher over them, and Thou art witness of all things” (5:116-118).

These are the verses of the Holy Qur’an wherein all that Jesus experienced at the hands of his people is related.

In the last verse (verse from the chapter *The Food*) there is a mention of an incident of the hereafter when Allah will ask Jesus concerning he and his mother being worshipped in the world. And Jesus in reply would say that he did not say aught to them except what God commanded him, viz., Worship Allah Who is your God and my God; and he kept a watch over them, during the period of his stay among them and that he did not know what they did after “Allah caused him to die.”

The word “*tawaffa*” is used in so many places of the Holy Qur’an in the sense of death that it has become its foremost meaning. This word is used in a different sense only when there is a clear indication as to this other meaning: “Say, The angel of death who is given charge of you shall *cause you to die*” (32:11); “Surely (as for) those whom the angles *caused to die* while they are unjust to their souls” (4:97); “And *had you seen*

when the angels will *cause to die those* who disbelieve.” (8:50); “Our messengers *cause him to die*,” (6:61); “And of you is he who *is caused to die*,” (22:5); “until death takes them away” (4:15); “*Make me die* a Muslim and join me with the good” (12:101).

The word “*tawaffaitani*” in this particular verse primarily means natural death which is known to everybody. The Arabic-speaking people understand this and only this meaning of the word with reference to the context. Therefore, had there been nothing else to indicate the end of Jesus in this verse even it would have been improper and wrong to say that Prophet Jesus was alive, and not dead.

There is no room for the view that the word “*Wafat*” here means the death of Jesus after his descent from the heavens — a view held by some who think that Jesus is still alive in the heavens and would come down from there in the latter days. For, this verse clearly denotes the relation of Jesus with his own people and not with any other people of the latter days. The people of the latter age would admittedly be the followers of Muhammad and not of Jesus.

However, in the chapter *The Women* the words: “*Nay: Allah exalted him in His presence*” have been interpreted by some, nay most of the commentators, as “*raising him up to the heavens*.” They observe that the likeness of Jesus was cast on somebody else and Jesus himself was lifted up to the heavens. He is alive there and will descend therefrom in the latter ages. Thereafter he would kill the swine and break the cross. And they base their theory:

*Firstly*, on those reports in which the descent of Jesus is mentioned after the (appearance of) Anti-Christ. But these reports are at variance with and contradictory to one another in their words and meaning. The difference is so great that there is no room for any reconciliation among them. The scholars of *Hadith* have plainly stated this fact. Moreover, they are reported by Wahab bin Munnabba and Kaab Akbar, who were converts from the people of the Book. And their status is well-known to the critics of traditions.

*Secondly*, on a report by Abu Huraira that mentions the descent of Jesus. If this report is proved to be true, even then it is only an isolated report. And there is a consensus of opinion of the scholars of *Hadith* that such isolated reports can neither be made the basis of a doctrinal belief, nor can they be trusted with regard to the things unseen.

*Thirdly*, on the report about *Mi’raj* (i.e., the Ascension of the Holy Prophet to the heavens) which narrates that when the Holy Prophet went up and began to have the gates of the heavens opened one after another

er and entered them as they were opened, he saw Jesus and his cousin John on the second heaven. For us, it is enough to prove the weakness of this evidence, that many interpreters of the traditions have taken this contact of the Holy Prophet with other prophets to be a spiritual phenomenon and not a physical one. (*vide Fath ul-Bari, Zad-ul-Ma'ad, etc.*)

Strangely enough they interpret the word *rafa'* occurring in this verse in the light of the report concerning the *Mi'raj*, and deduce therefrom that Jesus was also bodily raised up. And there are others who regard the meeting of the Holy Prophet with Jesus to be a physical one on the basis of this verse, (i.e., *Nay! Allah exalted him in His presence*). Thus when these people interpret the *hadith* they quote this verse to support their imaginary meaning of the *hadith*; and while interpreting the verse they cite this *hadith* to support their imaginary explanation of the verse.

When we turn to the revealed words of God “I will cause you to die and exalt you in my presence,” in the chapter *The Family of Imran* and the words “*Nay Allah exalted him in his presence,*” in the chapter *The Women*, we find that the latter verse fulfills the promise that was made in the former one. This promise was about the death and exaltation of Jesus Christ, and his purification from the false charges of the disbelievers. Thus even if the latter verse had mentioned just his *rafa'* towards God and had no reference to his death and purification from the false charges even then it should have been our duty to take note of those matters that are referred to in the former verse; so that both verses might be reconciled.

The actual meaning of the verse therefore is that Allah caused Jesus to die and exalted him and sanctified him from the charges of his enemies. *Allama* Alwasi has interpreted this verse (*inni mutawaffi-ka*) in many ways. The clearest of these interpretations is that “I will complete the lease of your life and will cause you to die and will not let those people dominate over you who try to kill you.” For, completing the period of his life and causing him to die a natural death indicates that Jesus was saved from being slain and from the mischief of his enemies. Obviously *rafa'* after death cannot mean any physical ascension, but only exaltation in rank, especially when the words “*I will clear you of those who disbelieve,*” are present along with it. This shows that it is a question of spiritual honour and exaltation. The word *rafa'* has occurred many a time in the Holy Qur'an conveying this sense: e.g., “In houses which Allah has permitted to be honoured (*turfa'a*) (24:36); “*We exalt in degree (narfa'u) whom We please*” (6:84; 12:76); “*And exalted (rafa'na) for you your eminence.*” (94:4); “*And We raised him (rafa'nahu) to an elevated state*” (19:57);

“Allah will exalt those of you who believe.” (58:11), etc. Thus the expressions “I will exalt you *in My presence*” and “*Nay! Allah exalted him in His presence*” would yield a sense similar to the one when we say “So and so met the companion on High,” or “God is with us,” or “With the Powerful King.” All these expressions signify only shelter, protection and coming under His Holy care. So one fails to understand how the word *heaven* is deduced from the word *towards Him (ilaih)*. By God! it is an outrage on the plain exposition of the Holy Qur'an. And such an offence is committed simply on account of belief in such stories and narratives which are devoid of accuracy not to speak of their established unauthenticity.

Moreover, Jesus was merely an apostle and apostles before him had passed away. When the people of Jesus became hostile to him, he like other prophets, turned towards God and He saved him by His power and wisdom, and frustrated the plans of his enemies. The same point has been elaborated in the following verse: “When Jesus perceived unbelief on their part, he said: Who will be my helpers in Allah's way ...” i.e., in this verse God says that His plans were more subtle and effective than the plans of the disbelievers. As against the measures of protection and security from God, the attempts of these people against the life of Jesus were frustrated. In the verse: “When Allah said : O Jesus! I will cause you to die and exalt you in My presence and clear you of those who disbelieve.” Allah gives the glad tidings that He will save Jesus from the machinations of his enemies and that ultimately their plottings will end in futility and that He will complete the period of his life till he dies a natural death neither being slain nor yet crucified and then He will exalt him in His presence.

These verses which relate to the fate of Jesus at the hands of his people will invariably yield this meaning to their reader provided he knows the practice of Allah to which He resorts for the protection of His prophets at the time of the aggression of enemies and provided his mind is free from all those fictitious reports that can in no case be placed as an authority over the Holy Qur'an. Now, I cannot understand how the snatching of Jesus from the hands of his enemies and lifting him up to the heavens can be called a subtle plan and a better one when neither it was in their power nor in the power of anybody else to counter it. In fact, there can be one “plan” (*makr*) as against another plan when it is contrived in a parallel manner not deviating from the natural course of Allah in such matters. We have a parallel instance in what is said by the Qur'an with respect of the Holy Prophet: “And when those who disbelieved and devised plans against you that they might confine you or slay you or drive you away: and they devised plans and Allah too had arranged a plan: and Allah is the

best of planners.” (8:30).

### To sum up:

1. There is nothing in the Holy Qur’an, nor in the sacred traditions of the Prophet, which authorises the correctness of the belief to the contentment of the heart that Jesus was taken up to the heaven with his body and is alive there even now, and would descend therefrom in the latter days.

2. The Quranic verses about Jesus show that God had promised to cause him to die a natural death, then to exalt him and save him from the mischief of the disbelievers and this promise had certainly been fulfilled. His enemies, could neither kill him nor crucify him, but God completed the span of his life and then caused him to die.

3. Any person who denies his bodily ascent and his continuance in physical existence in the heavens and his descent in the latter ages, does not deny a fact that can be established by clear conclusive arguments. Thus he is not outside the faith of Islam and it is absolutely wrong to consider him an apostate. He is perfectly a Muslim. If he dies, he dies the death of a believer and like believers his funeral prayer must be said and he must be buried in the Muslim cemetery. His faith is decidedly faultless in the eyes of God. And God knows the conditions of his servants.

And as to the other part of the question that, supposing Jesus returns to the world, then how should a disbeliever in him be regarded, after the above statement of ours this question does not arise at all. And God is the best Knower. ■

## The Woking Muslim Mission, 100 Years Later

By Dr. Zahid Aziz

*[This article was written by Dr. Zahid Aziz of England in commemoration of the centenary of the Woking Muslim Mission. In a concise yet very informative manner, Dr. Zahid Aziz relays the history of the Mission, canvasses the pioneering activities conducted therefrom, and captures the unique influence and value of the Mission in the introduction of Islam to the West. Dr. Zahid Aziz also manages the website [www.wokingmuslim.org](http://www.wokingmuslim.org), which is devoted to compiling information and records (in the form of printed material, photographs, newsreel film clips, etc.) about the history and activities of the Woking Muslim Mission.]*

24th September 2012 is the centenary of an event which was to place the town of Woking on the world map, in

particular the map of the Muslim world. It would lead to Woking being visited for the next fifty years or more by kings, statesmen, ambassadors, generals, intellectuals, students, business men, and other leading figures from all over the Muslim world, as well as British aristocrats, scholars, linguists, writers and soldiers who had embraced Islam. Woking came to be described as “a miniature of Mecca” in the West.

On that day in 1912, there arrived in England from Lahore, a city in British India, a man called Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din (1872-1932). He was by profession a lawyer and by vocation a lecturer and orator on the religion of Islam and comparative religion. He came to plead a civil case before the Privy Council in London, the highest court of appeal for Indian cases at the time. However, his plan beyond that was to present Islam in this country on public platforms and correct the very serious misconceptions about Islam and Muslims, under which the people of Britain and its religious and political leaders were labouring. He soon came to know of the existence of the mosque at Woking. It had been built in 1889 by Dr G.W. Leitner, a European scholar and linguist who had helped in India in the establishment of the University of the Punjab. The mosque was part of his proposed Oriental Institute, which never came to fruition. The cost of the construction of the mosque was largely donated by Begum Shah Jehan, the Muslim lady ruler of the state of Bhopal in India, and the cost of the land by the ruler of the Muslim state of Hyderabad Deccan.

From 1889, past the death of Dr Leitner in 1899, to the year 1913, the mosque was opened only on special occasions and was generally derelict and disused. Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, while considering where to base his missionary activities, first visited the mosque in January 1913. In the summer of 1913, with the help of two prominent Indian Muslims who held high official positions (Sir Abbas Ali Baig and the Right Honourable Syed Ameer Ali), the Khwaja had a trust created to take charge of the property and its status declared as a mosque open for the use of all Muslims. He moved to the mosque as Imam in mid-August 1913 during the month of Ramadan, and opened it for regular use for the first time, with the call to prayer being sounded five times a day. In the house next to the mosque, he established the Woking Muslim Mission.

The purpose of opening the mosque was not merely to provide a prayer venue for Muslims in Britain. The Khwaja considered his most important work as being to place an accurate image of Islam before the British people, as the religion which best fulfilled the needs of the modern times. Leading Muslims in the Indian subcontinent considered this as an utterly mad and foolhardy

venture, doomed to failure. How could Islam be acceptable in Britain, the country which dominated the world with its most advanced civilization, based on Christianity and science, while Muslims were considered to be mere barbarians following a primitive faith unacceptable by any modern standards? How could the British, with their mighty rule over a large part of the Muslim world, including the country from where the Khwaja came, take spiritual guidance from someone belonging to their subject races who was promoting his inferior religion? Yet the Khwaja was convinced that, if the real and true Islam was presented in Britain, refuting its prevalent, distorted image, people would become sympathetic to it, and many of them would succumb to its appeal and attraction. He derived this conviction, drive and energy from his contact with his spiritual mentor, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908).

Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din launched the monthly *Islamic Review* in February 1913, which remained in publication till around 1970. Besides containing articles on religious issues, it published news relating to Muslims in Britain and thus its archives are a unique chronicle of the history of Islam and Muslims in this country during those years.

With Woking as his base, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din went around Britain giving lectures on Islam. His activities were reported in national newspapers as well as local papers such as the *Surrey Advertiser* and the *Woking News and Mail*. The British Pathe news organisation filmed more than a dozen occasions at the mosque between 1914 and 1958, which can be viewed on its website.

Soon the Khwaja gained many British converts to his faith, among them people of high education and some titled persons. The most famous of them was a peer of the realm and distinguished civil engineer, Lord Headley, who, after accepting Islam in November 1913, worked tirelessly to help the cause of the Woking Mission till his death in 1935.

Numerous books on Islam were published from Woking, many of them written by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din himself. In 1917 the monumental and voluminous English translation of the Quran with extensive commentary, by Maulana Muhammad Ali of Lahore, the first such work by a Muslim available in the West, was published from the Woking mosque.

The Woking Mosque and Mission became the national centre of Islamic activity in Britain. Its Imam was regarded by the government as the de facto head of the Muslim community of the U.K. The Eid prayers at Woking were, till the mid-1960s, a national event for

Muslims of Britain. It became commonplace for visiting dignitaries of international fame from the Muslim world to call at the Woking Mosque. Kings, princes, presidents, sultans, generals, statesmen, political leaders, ambassadors, high government officials, writers and intellectuals from Muslim countries came to Woking to visit the mosque and attend functions organised by the Mission.

A Muslim, observing the Eid-ul-Adha gathering at Woking, a festival which takes place on the occasion of the great Pilgrimage to Mecca, wrote in 1930: "Almost all Muslim nations in the world are represented in the gardens of the Mosque, prostrating themselves before their God and magnifying the Most High, even as they magnify Him at Mecca on this sacred occasion. Woking is the only town in the world which becomes on such days a replica in miniature of the Ancient House of God in Arabia."

Initially working with the barest of help, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din arranged for staffing of the mission from India. The missionary and administrative staff which came from the Indian subcontinent had, like the Khwaja, to make great sacrifices. The journey to England took at least three weeks by sea and rail. Here they were faced with an entirely unfamiliar environment, suffering hardships and deprived of all the cultural and social facilities for Muslims which only started becoming available here in the 1960s. They left families behind, and the normal means of communication with home was by letter. People today cannot conceive that coming to the U.K. in those days was not an alluring prospect. It was the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement which made the sacrifices to provide the staff and the finances for the running of the Woking Muslim Mission.

Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din concluded his first visit to Britain in August 1914, returning again in 1916. He made four or five visits in all. At the end of his third visit, in June 1923, he accompanied Lord Headley to the pilgrimage at Mecca, a journey widely covered in the press here and in the Middle East. On the way, they passed through Egypt where public meetings were held in Lord Headley's honour. They paid a call upon Field-Marshal Lord Allenby, the British representative in Egypt, who sent a report about their visit to the Foreign Secretary in London, Lord Curzon, these two men being famous in British history. During the two World Wars, the Woking Muslim Mission extended its support to Britain, in the same way as the British public did.

During the First World War, Kitchener's famous appeal "Your King & Country Need You" was published in the *Islamic Review*. In 1914 the Imam of the Woking Mosque was invited by the War Office to

approve a site for a Muslim cemetery for the burial of soldiers who died here after being wounded in the battle-fields of France and Belgium. The Imam suggested that the cemetery should be better located in Woking. The War Office accepted his suggestion, and as a result a cemetery was established within Brookwood, which also came to be used as a general Muslim cemetery.

When the Second World War began, the Imam of the Woking Mosque declared in his Eid sermon in November 1939: “Muslims are ordered [in the Quran] to sacrifice their lives not only to save their own mosques but the religious houses of other peoples as well. ...the very fact that synagogues have been pulled down in Germany upon the slightest pretext makes it obligatory upon us Muslims to throw our weight into the cause of the Allies”.

A Muslim convert, First World War veteran, and Woking resident by the name of Major J.W.B. Farmer (1897–1966), M.B.E., M.C., who was also a trustee of the Woking Mosque, was awarded the M.B.E. after the Second World War “in recognition of Meritorious Service in the Home Guard” in Surrey.

The Woking Mission also supported various just Muslim causes around the world and brought them to the notice of the public and press in this country. As early as 1917 it publicised the case for justice in Palestine. The best minds from all over the Muslim world used to meet at the Woking mosque, where they used to hold discussions on problems facing their countries. The campaign for an independent Muslim homeland on the Indian subcontinent, with the proposed name of Pakistan, started from a meeting of students at the Woking mosque in 1932.

Various Muslim U.K. national organisations also had either their birth at the Woking Mission or sought assistance from the Mission in their early days. The first public meeting of the “British Muslim Society” was held at the Woking mosque on 20th December 1914. The first ever “Congress of Muslims living in the U.K.” was a gathering called by the Woking Mission, and it was held as a two-day event on 25–26 June 1952 at the Woking Mosque.

The Central London Mosque in Regents Park owes its origin to the Woking Muslim Mission. The plan to build a Mosque in Central London was proposed by Lord Headley during the First World War. This was followed up in the 1930s by the creation of a Trust, collection of funds, purchase of land, and even laying of the foundation stone in West Kensington, near Olympia. This Trust, whose original members were headed by Lord Headley and Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, was later incorporated into the Trust that controls the Central

London Mosque in Regents Park today.

In this article, we must also note the general picture of Islam as presented from the Woking Muslim Mission. The distinctive features of Islam as emphasised through this Mission’s work are that:

The beliefs and practices of Islam are simple and rational, and to be understood in the light of knowledge and reason. There are no dogmas, mysteries or rituals imposed upon a believer.

The teachings of Islam are broadminded and tolerant. Islam accepts others religions as being originally revealed by God, acknowledges good in people of other faiths, grants complete freedom of religion to all, and urges friendship between faiths.

In Islam there is no priesthood which controls the way to God.

Islam creates a universal brotherhood of people of all countries, races, colours, classes and cultures, disregarding all such distinctions.

Islam is not tied to the local culture of any Muslim country.

It is a religion of unity, whose followers should be united by its fundamental teachings, but who respect one another’s differences.

### **Legacy of the Woking Muslim Mission**

During the 1960s Muslim migrants, mostly from Pakistan, arrived in the U.K. and settled in various towns and cities, forming communities of increasing size. Muslim religious centres and mosques began to spring up around the country, catering to the religious and cultural needs of their local Muslim communities. The Woking Mosque too went into the hands of other management who turned it to the use of the local Muslim population. From around 1968 onwards, Woking ceased to be the national centre for Muslims of the U.K. and to serve its international role for the Muslim world. The Woking Muslim Mission no longer operated.

The passage of time since then, however, has proved that the picture of Islam as presented by the Woking Mission is needed more than ever before in order to solve the problems of the Muslims in the U.K. and to improve their standing in the country and their relationship with the wider community. Islam as preached from the Woking Mission was the very opposite of the religious extremism, isolation and separatism from general society, and wholesale rejection of all modern ideas, which are the attitudes, rightly or wrongly, associated with Muslims living in the U.K. today. The Woking

Mission did not teach that Muslims should become an inward-looking community, living in isolation and regarding the outside society as a threat. Instead of this, Muslims must communicate and interact with the wider society, explain their faith to others sympathetically, respond to criticism in a dignified manner, present to others the best they can offer from their values, and accept from others the best they have to offer. In responding to offence or grievances, whether real or perceived, Muslims must be temperate and abstain from violence.

The Woking Mission also showed how Muslims could be true to Islam and yet fit into British society and life. For this they must correct some of their own religious notions which are not justified by Islam, and they must bring about reform of certain Muslim cultural and social practices which are not part of the religion of Islam but merely local customs in some places in the Muslim world which are now proving harmful. ■

*Article compiled: 8 September 2012. e-mail: info@wokingmuslim.org*

## The Jihad of Promoting Islam's Message of Peace and Reconciliation to the World

A Special Message for Members of the Lahore  
Ahmadiyya Movement

By Maulana Muhammad Ali

*[This Jumma khutba (sermon) was delivered by Maulana Muhammad Ali on May 26, 1922, during the month of Ramadan. Although short in length, the message is profound. It is an emotional reminder of the objective of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement: to promote Islam's message of peace and reconciliation to the world. It is also a testimony to the purpose for the existence of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement: to engage in practical works, not simply adhere to certain beliefs and interpretations. In the wake of Eid-ul-Fitr, when Muslims experience feelings of joy for having sacrificed during the preceding month of Ramadan, Maulana Muhammad Ali reminds members of the Movement of the grand task of promoting the true religion of Islam to the world, the task that forms the basis for membership in the Movement and for which one may experience Eid (literally, "recurring happiness") in the next life as well.]*

I bear witness that none deserves to be served besides Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the servant and messenger of Allah. After this I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

And when I revealed to the disciples, saying, Believe in Me and My messenger, they said: We believe and bear witness that we submit.

When the disciples said: O Jesus, son of Mary, is thy Lord able to send down food to us from heaven? He said: Keep your duty to Allah if you are believers. (5: 111-112)

When the followers of Jesus (peace be upon him) asked him: "Is thy Lord able to send down food to us from heaven?" He received the sublime answer from the One Who Nurtures unto Perfection: "Keep your duty to Allah if you are believers." This does not mean that they should fear Allah and not ask such a question. In a message, full of wisdom, they are informed that the objective of a prophet's mission is not to give food or to establish the power of a nation but to make them aware of their duty to God. They are told that if they believe in Jesus as a prophet and messenger sent to them by Allah, the Most High, then it is not appropriate to ask for material sustenance. Rather, as believers, they were to understand the real purpose of his mission: to learn the way in which they can fulfill their duties towards Allah and safeguard human rights. Unfortunately the prayer of the Gospel asking God to "Give us this day our daily bread" resulted in neglect of this pearl of wisdom. The Holy Quran gave it back to us and guided us towards its true meaning. The real *Eid* of the believers is not related to eating and drinking, but in fulfilling our duties as a human being.

On this occasion, I want to specifically draw the attention of members of our organization towards this objective. Islam has connected its two *Eids* with two magnificent sacrifices which individuals have either made, or it wants them to make. We are thus told that the real happiness for a believer lies in giving something for, or in giving something up to seek the pleasure of Allah. This is the greatest blessing that can be given to man.

And none has with him any boon for a reward, except the seeking of the pleasure of his Lord, the Most High. (Ch.92: 19-20)

So everything eventually perishes and only the work of God remains. Allah, the Most High will sustain the works which are done to seek His pleasure. Thus, with thirty days of fasting in *Ramadhan*, a Muslim is taught to quit eating and drinking during the day solely for the pleasure of Allah. He is to withhold his tongue from saying evil, his ears from hearing the bad word and his eyes from seeing what is prohibited. Besides giving up all of this, he is also advised to spend more in the way of Allah, and also worship Him more than his regular obligations. After a person has done all this for the pleasure

of Allah, he is told to be happy and celebrate. This is the reason why Eid falls after the month of fasting.

Our real happiness lies in this that we were successful in accomplishing something for the pleasure of Allah. Whatever task we accomplish is a stepping stone for our future progress, and if we do not use it to ascend the ladder of progress, the task becomes useless. This is why we have the Eid sermon (*khutba*). The purpose of the Eid sermon is to inform the Muslims of their obligations and the important issues they are currently facing. It is therefore my desire that members of our organization wherever they are gathered for the Eid prayer, inform their members of this eminent duty which is the foremost means of attaining the pleasure of Allah. What is this duty? It is propagating the word of Allah, the task of the truthful, the faithful and the righteous. O Allah, “guide us on the right path, the path of those upon whom thou has bestowed favors” (1:6-7). Our sights should be set upon this lofty goal and not the fulfillment of our low desires. We should exert all our efforts for this purpose so that the time of our death is also a time of happiness for us. Our condition in the words of the Holy Quran should be such that our: “Faces on that day will be bright, laughing, joyous.” (80:38-39)

All our friends are to be reminded of this duty that we have taken the pledge of propagating the word of God at the hands of the Promised Messiah. We should have full respect for this commitment in our hearts. **The greatest desire in our hearts should be to convey Islam’s message of peace and reconciliation to the whole world.** In fact we have only taken the first step in this direction. For those who follow us we will be foremost, but no one becomes foremost by being ahead in the frame of time. We can truly be in the forefront only by exceeding in righteous deeds, and making a full effort for this purpose.

I have repeatedly informed you of the task that lies in front of us. Let alone those who have not accepted Islam, Muslims themselves have forgotten this message which was sent for them to be successful. Amongst us should be those who have such fervor for the propagation of Islam and they sally forth with such frenzy that difficult and mountainous terrain appears easy to them. After all seemingly un-surmountable mountains of hardship can crumble before human determination. Others amongst us while performing their daily work carry within their hearts the desire that whenever given the opportunity they will go forth in Allah’s way. They should always be ready for this task. There must also be amongst us those who are ready to sacrifice their wealth in the way of Allah, for no organization can run without such diversity. **Our Eid must rejuvenate such feelings in our hearts that we ask ourselves these questions.**

### **What is the responsibility we have taken upon our shoulders and how much effort is needed to discharge it?**

It is the job of all the preachers to remind you of this. It is only with Allah’s blessing that one gets the opportunity for action. I firmly believe that the word coming forth from a truthful heart will always have its effect. It is also my duty to inform you that this magnificent work cannot be performed without the collective striving of the whole community. We should always be concerned about increasing the numbers of those who are willing to participate with us in serving this cause. Allah, the Most High has not sent the Reformer (*Mujaddid*) and Messiah of this age in vain and it is by affiliating with him only that we can perform this task successfully. You must also be concerned about the future existence and the performance of the organization that has been formed. Make an effort to promote mutual love and affection amongst yourselves. Create opportunities to get together and meet each other. This helps in building up strength amongst individual members. The best purpose of a gathering is only achieved if we can initiate Quranic lessons (*dars*) within our organization wherever it exists. It is also the duty of every *Ahmadi*<sup>1</sup> parent that their child whether it is a girl or a boy be able to recite the Holy Quran and understand its meaning. They must also have a basic understanding of principles of religion (*sharia*) and the life history of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Congregational prayers and payment of obligatory charity (*Zakaat*) should also be emphasized. ■

1. Reference is being made to members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement.

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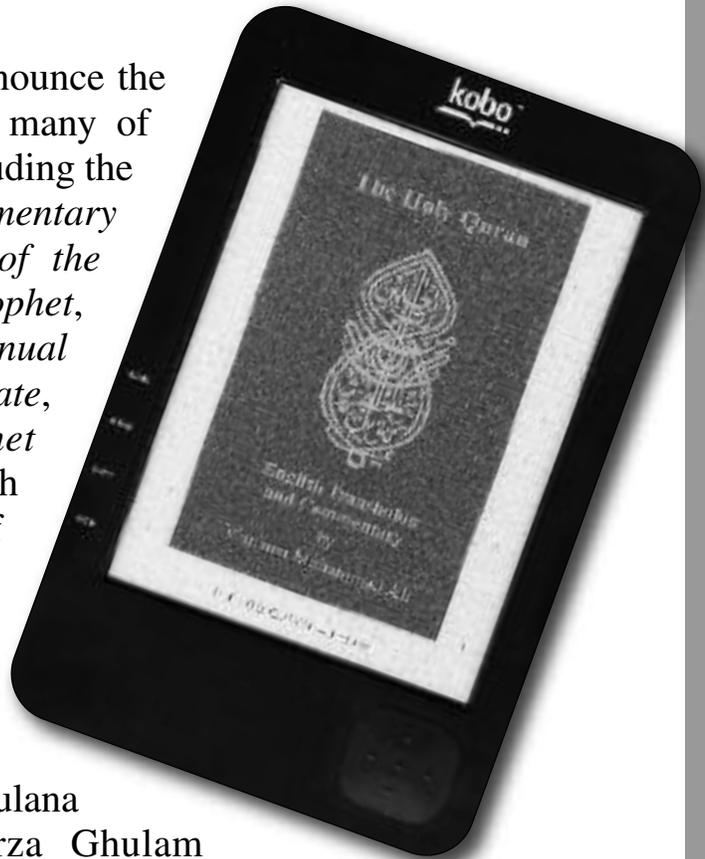
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