

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

# The Muslim Thinker

Quarterly journal of  
THE AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA‘AT ISLAM LAHORE (U.K.)  
(Founded 1913 as the Working Muslim Mission)

*A periodical devoted to showing that Islam is:*  
PEACEFUL – TOLERANT – RATIONAL – INSPIRING

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*All communications should be sent to The Imam at the address on front cover.*

The *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore* is an international Muslim association, founded in 1914, dedicated to the propagation of Islam. It presents the *true, original* message of Islam, as found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, a message obscured today by grave misconceptions.

We believe that Islam seeks to *attract the hearts and minds of people* towards the truth, by means of reasoning, persuasion and a display of its own inherent beauty. It condemns the use of coercion, force or political power to advance the faith.

Some Islamic teachings which we stress are as follows. Islam is:

- (1) **Peaceful:** Only allows use of force in unavoidable self-defence; teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion. (2) **Tolerant:** Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practise any belief or religion. (3) **Rational:** In all matters, it urges use of reason and the ever-growing knowledge of mankind; blind following is disallowed, and independence of thought granted. (4) **Inspiring:** Worship is not a ritual, but a living contact with a living God. God listens to man, answers his prayers, and speaks to His righteous servants even today.

Our Founder, *Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad* (d. 1908), was a servant of Islam, with the mission of bringing about the spiritual and intellectual victory of Islam. He believed that, after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, NO prophet is needed or can arise. However, Divinely-ordained reformers will continually arise to rejuvenate the religion and rekindle a true, living faith within the hearts.

# Lahore Ahmadiyya Association Report

Under the above title, we recently compiled and sent to the Home Secretary a Report about our history, aims, work and beliefs. It is now reproduced in this journal, starting below and concluding in our next issue.

*Date:* 15 March 1988

*To:* The Secretary of State for Home Affairs, Home Office, London

*From:* Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore (U.K.)

'Darus Salaam', 15 Stanley Avenue, Wembley, Middlesex HA0 4JQ

Sir,

It appears from *The Times* of 17 August 1987 that the Home Office is conducting an inquiry into Muslim organisations in Britain. As we are such an organisation, we present to you a description of our aims and work. Our organisation is very probably the first Muslim body ever in this country, and for many decades it was the only such body and the sole representative of Islam and Muslims here.

## 1. Origin and parent body

The Ahmadiyya Movement was founded one hundred years ago in the Punjab, India, by a highly regarded scholar and saint by the name of MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD of the village of Qadian (1835-1908). One of the aims of this missionary movement was to correct the false image of Islam prevalent in the West, and to propagate its true teachings in these lands where this faith had been much maligned and misunderstood. Another aim was to reform certain prevalent notions and practices of Muslims which were contrary to the original teaching and spirit of the faith.

In 1914, some leading followers of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (whom he had appointed, shortly before his death, as trustees to

administer the movement) founded in Lahore an organisation known as *The Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam* (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam). It is also sometimes called the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. The head of this organisation was Maulana MUHAMMAD ALI (1874-1951), who is well-known in the English-knowing Muslim world as the author of several excellent works on Islam. Another founding member was KHAWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN (d. 1932), a distinguished Muslim lawyer who founded the Working Muslim mission in this country.

The guiding philosophy of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman is that if Islam is presented in its original, true light, and the widespread misconceptions about it are proved to be wrong, then the people of the world will be attracted by the truth and beauty they will find in this religion. The prejudice and hostility against Islam shown by the advanced nations will decrease and gradually give way to respect and appreciation.

To this end, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman has produced extensive Islamic literature (particularly in European languages), and established missions and branches around the world to promote its picture of Islam. The English books by Maulana Muhammad Ali have acquired international acclaim, and are a standard part of Islamic literature in English. The following may be especially mentioned here:

1. *The English translation of the Holy Quran with full commentary.*
2. *The Religion of Islam:* a voluminous work covering all aspects of the faith of Islam. (A review on this magnificent book is quoted later in this Report.)
3. *A Manual of Hadith:* Sayings and Doings of the Holy Prophet. (This book has proved so popular that a British publisher, the Curzon Press, have published two editions of it themselves.)
4. *Muhammad The Prophet:* biographical work.
5. *The New World Order:* how Islam can deal with modern world problems.

6. *Living Thoughts of the Prophet Muhammad*: written by the Maulana at the invitation of English publisher Cassell and Co.

Due to the immense international demand and popularity of these books, they have been translated into many other languages. This has not only been done by our movement, but in many instances when the original books reached various non-English speaking countries, translations were produced by the people there at their own initiative. (Some of these books have been translated into Arabic by Arabs themselves, and this fact is a remarkable tribute because, throughout history, works on Islam have been translated *from* Arabic into other languages.)

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman has also been establishing missions and centres around the world. The Woking Mission is dealt with fully in the next section, as it is relevant to Islam in Britain. Some other centres may be briefly listed here. The Anjuman built a mosque in Berlin in 1925, which is now located in West Berlin and houses a mission. We have a sizeable following in Holland (mostly of Suriname origin), with buildings in the Hague, Utrecht, Rotterdam and Amsterdam. Elsewhere in the world we have missions and branches in: U.S.A., Canada, South Africa, Trinidad, Guyana, Suriname, Indonesia, India, the Fiji Islands, Australia and other places.

## 2. The Woking Mission

It was in 1912 that KHAWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN came to England in connection with his legal practice, to plead a case before the Privy Council (the highest court of appeal for India at the time). He stayed on to establish a Muslim mission here and start a monthly magazine *Muslim India and the Islamic Review* (later known as *The Islamic Review*). He learnt that a mosque had been built in Woking, Surrey, in 1889 by a deceased English orientalist, Dr. G. W. Leitner, but was lying empty and unused. Khawaja Kamal-ud-Din arranged for the mosque to be opened and established the Woking Muslim Mission there in 1913. The mosque is set in large grounds with a residential building, which served as the mission.

The Woking Muslim mission became the one and only centre of Islam in Britain, and retained this position for over fifty years. Although its primary function was the propagation of Islam among the native Christian population, it also became a cultural and social centre for all Muslims in Britain. During most of the life of the mission, the Muslim community here largely consisted of students, business men and diplomats from the Islamic world. Distinguished Muslim visitors to this country, such as members of royal families, political leaders, intellectuals etc., very often made a point of coming to Woking to see the mosque and attend the mission's meetings. (Among numerous examples, four may be cited here: King Faisal of Saudi Arabia when he was foreign minister in the 1930s; Mr Jinnah, later Founder of Pakistan, in 1932; Mr Ayub Khan, later President of Pakistan, in 1954 when he was commander-in-chief of the army; Tunku Abdul Rahman, Prime Minister of Malaysia, in 1961.) Muslim scholars from all over the world contributed articles to the mission's magazine, *The Islamic Review*, and it became probably the first international Muslim organ in English.

By the early 1960s, the *Eid* prayer gatherings at Woking attracted congregations of about 3000 people from all over Britain. These events were covered by reporters from national newspapers and the television channels. The government for long consulted the mission when there was some matter concerning Muslims. (During the First World War, at the request of the government, the Imam of Woking performed the duties equivalent to chaplain for wounded and dying Muslim soldiers of the British army shipped here from France.)

In its missionary and religious work, the Woking mission used a totally non-sectarian policy. In fact, it had a slogan: There are no sects in Islam. It advocated that the differences between the various so-called sects of Islam relate only to secondary issues, and that Muslims of all persuasions agree on the fundamentals of Islam. In the prayer services at Woking, the same congregation contained Muslims from different Sunni sects, and Shiah sects, and prayers would be led by anyone regardless of his sect. (A mixed congregation is almost

unthinkable in the Indian subcontinent due to sectarian bigotry; and this animosity has regrettably been brought into Britain now as well.) The Woking mission also had sponsors and trustees belonging to different Muslims sects. Many renowned members of the Indian Muslim community (who were not in the Ahmadiyya movement) supported the mission, for instance: Sayyid Ameer Ali (author of the famous English book *The Spirit of Islam*), the Begum of Bhopal (a Muslim princess), Mirza Sir Abbas Ali Baig (a member of the Imperial India Council), Sir Muhammad Shafi, etc.

Among the converts to Islam won over by the Woking mission in its early days were distinguished figures including: Lord Headley, a peer of the realm; Sir Archibald Hamilton, related to the royal family; Lady Evelyn Cobbold; Sir Umar Hubert Rankin; Deputy Inspector-General C. W. Buchanan Hamilton (Royal Navy); etc. etc.

The Woking mission was run by an independent trust on non-sectarian lines. But heads of the mission, imams of the mosque, and many other officials were members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman. The ideological inspiration of the mission came from the Lahore Ahmadiyya movement, and the literature it disseminated for the propagation of Islam was also produced and supplied by the Lahore Ahmadiyya.

This situation lasted till the mid-1960s. By that time, a number of sectarian Muslim religious leaders had arrived in this country from Pakistan. Owing to their animosity towards our movement, they campaigned to end the link between the Woking Trust and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman. They were able to exploit the non-sectarian nature of the administration of the mission, and its tolerant attitude towards all sections of Muslims, to take control of the mission.

Since that time, the Woking mosque has been reduced to the same kind of inter-Muslim sectarian squabbling which is the sad spectacle seen in many an Islamic centre in Britain.

Our movement in England now operates from a centre in Wembley.

### 3. Reaction of general Muslims

At the close of the last section, the hostility of some Muslim religious leaders towards our movement has been mentioned. An understanding of our movement would not be complete without considering the attitude adopted towards it by Muslims outside the movement. Generally speaking, eminent Muslim leaders, political as well as religious, have appreciated and applauded our aims and work. On the other hand, petty sectarian religious leaders or what might be called the professional priests of Islam, especially those who seek political power under the cloak of religion, have shown us bitter hostility. First we quote the opinions of two sunni Muslim religious scholars and two political leaders as typical of the appreciation of our movement.

*i) Marmaduke Pickthall (d. 1936)*

He was a famous British Muslim whose English rendering of the Quran is one of the most popular translations today. Shortly before his death, he wrote a review of Maulana Muhammad Ali's book *The Religion of Islam* in which he said:

“Probably no man living has done longer or more valuable service for the cause of Islamic revival than Maulana Muhammad Ali of Lahore. His literary works, with those of the late Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, have given fame and distinction to the Ahmadiyya Movement. In our opinion the present volume is his finest work . . . It is a description of Islam by one well-versed in the Quran and the Sunna who has on his mind the shame of the Muslim decadence of the past five centuries and in his heart the hope of the revival of which signs can now be seen on every side. . . .

“Such a book is greatly needed at the present day when in many Muslim countries we see persons eager for the reformation and revival of Islam making mistakes through lack of just this knowledge. . . .

“We do not always agree with Maulana Muhammad Ali's conclusions upon minor points — sometimes they appear to us

eccentric — but his premises are always sound, we are always conscious of his deep sincerity; and his reverence for the holy Quran is sufficient in itself to guarantee his work in all essentials. There are some, no doubt, who will disagree with his general findings, but they will not be those from whom Islam has anything to hope in the future.”

(*Islamic Culture*, quarterly review published from Hyderabad Deccan, India, October 1936, pp. 659–660)

ii) *Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi* (d. 1977)

He was a well-known Muslim theologian of India, and a recognised leader of orthodox opinion. In a message at the death of Maulana Muhammad Ali (in 1951), he wrote:

“To deny the services of the deceased to Islam is to deny the existence of the sun in daylight. Twenty-one years ago, when I was drowned in the poison and heresy spread by western ideas, it was the deceased’s English translation of the Quran which guided me. Otherwise, only God knows how much longer I would have been lost, and only God knows for how many people, as for me, it proved to be the guiding light. Then his writings: the Urdu commentary of the Quran, translation of Bukhari, Early Caliphate, Life of the Holy Prophet, Islam the Religion of Humanity, A Manual of Hadith — each more useful and excellent than another, are in existence.”

iii) *Mohamed Ali* (d. 1931)

A namesake of our Maulana Muhammad Ali, he was a famous Indian Muslim nationalist leader who worked alongside Gandhi for some-time. In his autobiography, he writes:

“It was about this time that a kind friend sent to us a gift than which nothing could be more acceptable, a copy of the Quran, printed in a very high quality, accompanied by a most authentic translation and informative notes which are based on a deep study of commentaries of the Quran and the Jewish

and Christian scriptures. This was the work of my learned namesake Maulvi Muhammad Ali of Lahore, leader of a fairly numerous religious community, some of whose members were doing missionary work in England. They have established a mission at the Woking mosque. This translation and the notes under it are an essential antidote to the poison found in the footnotes of the translators such as Sale, Rodwell and Palmer ... and in the frame of mind in which I then was I wrote back to my friend who had sent these copies of the Quran that nothing would please me better than to go to Europe as soon as I could get out of the 'bounds' prescribed by my internment and preach to these war maniacs from every park and at every street corner. And preach to them the holy religion which can silence the noise of these war-mongering nations with the unifying peace of Islam."

(English book *My Life — A Fragment*, edited by Afzal Iqbal, published by Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1966, pp. 115-116)

*iv) Mr Feroz Khan Noon*

He was a famous Pakistani statesman of the 1950s. At the time of Maulana Muhammad Ali's death in 1951, when he was Governor of East Bengal, he sent the following message:

"This is a great loss, which not only myself but the whole Islamic world will share with you. The Maulana's writings will live forever. I do not know of any other person who rendered such great service to revive Islam, as did the Maulana. No example can be found in the past five hundred years."

(First published in Ahmadiyya newspaper *Paigham Sulh*, special issue, 26 December 1951, p. 58)

The above reviews have been quoted as illustrating the high regard in which many eminent Muslim figures held our movement's work.

When Pakistan was created, the ruling elements belonged to the liberal, enlightened class of Muslims, who seek guidance from the

spirit and purpose of Islamic teachings, and are tolerant of differences of opinion. They had high regard for the Lahore Ahmadiyya movement, and often sought guidance from our literature to see how Islamic ideals could be introduced in a modern world. As opposed to this, there are the literalist religious fundamentalist groups whose objective is to restore, in every detail, that decadent form of Islam which came to prevail during the middle and later stages of Muslim history. These groups in general, and particularly the Jama'at-i Islami led by the late Maulana Maudoodi, opposed the founders and the foundation of Pakistan very bitterly. So when Pakistan came into being despite their opposition, the leaders of these groups naturally found themselves discredited with the masses.

In order to gain popularity, they seized upon the idea of making the Ahmadiyya movement a scapegoat which they could portray as an enemy of Islam, and which they could claim to be fighting in the name of Islam. In 1952 and 1953, these religious leaders instigated public disturbances in the province of the Punjab, demanding government action against Ahmadis. After the agitation was put down, the Punjab government set up a public court of inquiry headed by Chief Justice Munir to examine the causes. The inquiry produced a detailed, incisive and authoritative document, popularly known as the *Munir Report* (Punjab Government, Pakistan, April 1954). The court searchingly questioned all the zealots about their demands for an 'Islamic state', and showed that their views were a total anachronism in this day and age. The report also shows that the leaders of the disturbances were solely interested in political power, as opposed to their claims of a moral, religious basis for their agitation. This report, published in 1954 by the provincial government of the Punjab, and produced by Pakistan's most distinguished supreme court judge Mr Muhammad Munir, is today not available from that country's authorities. (In a book published in 1980 shortly before his death, entitled *From Jinnah to Zia*, Justice Munir has quoted many essential passages from his report.)

The influence of the politically-motivated religious leaders remain-

ed limited during the 1950s and 1960s. But as the memory of their opposition to the creation of Pakistan faded with time, their influence grew, and eventually in 1974 they forced Mr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's secular government to incorporate in the constitution clauses to say that Ahmadis are not Muslims but constitute a religion separate from Islam. (This action was an irony and a farce because during the election campaign which brought Mr Bhutto to power, he and his party had themselves been branded as *kafir* and outside the fold of Islam by the same religious leaders.)

Then in April 1984 President Zia-ul-Haq took further measures by issuing a Presidential ordinance prohibiting Ahmadis from referring to themselves as Muslims and following certain Muslim practices, on pain of penalty. (This is another irony and farce, because President Zia's government considers Mr Bhutto's regime as having been anti-Islamic with no authority or competence to act in the name of Islam.) Through its embassies abroad, the Pakistan government has been distributing extensive anti-Ahmadiyya literature in all countries where there are Muslim communities, and the Muslim public is being told today that Ahmadis are enemies of Islam and holders of objectionable and heretical beliefs. This is why we have quoted the reviews above, to show the very different views held about us by Muslim leaders of a generation or two ago.

It may be noted that the introduction of the anti-Ahmadiyya legislation in Pakistan has, as a wider consequence, exacerbated the inter-sectarian feuding between other Muslim sects. Demands are now constantly being made by one sect or another for the government to declare some rival group as being non-Muslim in the same manner in which Ahmadis were declared non-Muslim.

The response of the Lahore Ahmadiyya movement to these hostile circumstances is to continue to adhere to its long-standing non-sectarian approach. Our belief is that Islam is a force for unity and harmony for all mankind. We could hardly preach these virtues of Islam and at the same time indulge in sectarian squabbles ourselves! We continue to stress, both to our Muslim brothers and to our friends

of other faiths, that there are NO differences of essential belief among various Muslim groups, no differences which should lead to division, separation or mutual animosity. Secondary differences, which should be a matter of tolerance, are being exploited by politically ambitious religious leaders.

We hold, in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet, that if a person calls himself a Muslim, or if a person adheres to any of the basic signs of a Muslim (e.g. acknowledging the *Kalima*, or saying prayers in the Muslim fashion), then no one has the right or authority to announce that he is not a Muslim.

*(The last Section of the Report, dealing with our beliefs, will appear in the next issue.)*

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## About Ourselves

As mentioned in the last article, the Woking Mission was founded in 1913 and a periodical, *The Islamic Review*, was started which appeared for over fifty years. It was a high quality magazine which carried articles correcting the wild and deeply-held misconceptions about Islam prevalent in the West, and presenting its true picture. It also battled to refute the doctrines of those faiths which were constantly attacking and denouncing Islam. The contents of the journal drew their inspiration heavily from the exposition of Islam given by *Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad* and the Lahore Ahmadiyya movement. The Woking mission had the collaboration of many eminent Muslims of the time, from the general Muslim world, and they realised, no doubt, that this exposition of Islam met the needs of the time, while it would be of no avail to present the *Mulla's* concept of the faith.

For a variety of reasons, that *Islamic Review* did not touch any distinctive "Ahmadiyya" issue: Islam was only just being introduced to this country; and there was no sectional distinction in the tiny Muslim community here.

From the 1960s, the situation changed as Muslims began to settle here, and shortly following them came the petty religious leaders, bringing with them sectarianism, a medieval picture of Islam, and hostility to the Ahmadiyya movement and its reform work. Under these circumstances, as elaborated earlier, the Woking mission with its policy of unity and support for reform could no longer function as a collaborative effort, and closed down.

Soon afterwards, so-called “fundamentalists” (more aptly, *literalists*) came to prominence in the Islamic world, and since then their image of Islam has been widely broadcast all over the world, including this country.

When the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore created its present branch in the mid-1970s to replace the Woking mission, the new circumstances dictated two new, crucial aspects to its work. First, we have to present the true image of Islamic teachings in clear and sharp contrast to the highly-publicised pronouncements of the “fundamentalists”, and prove conclusively that only the former truly represents the actual teachings of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Second, the widely-spread false propaganda against Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and our movement has to be refuted, and the poisonous misconceptions about his work and claims have to be corrected.

Some ten years ago, we started a quarterly, *The Islamic Guardian*, with these objectives in mind. It was published until 1985, when pressure of other work led to its suspension. But demand and need for such a journal have become more than ever. We are, therefore, commencing publication of the quarterly now in your hands, under the title *The Muslim Thinker*. It will both strive to show the truth of the religion of Islam, and to prove that Islam as presented by Hazrat Mirza and the Lahore Ahmadiyya movement is true to the Quran and the Holy Prophet’s example. It will also show that whatever Hazrat Mirza wrote or did in pursuance of his mission accords with, in fact stems from, the path followed by the righteous of all times, and the fourteen centuries long Muslim spiritual tradition.

## False Story of Revelation from Devil

*Satan cannot corrupt word of God to a Prophet*

There is a baseless story, found in some Muslim classical works, referring to a time in his early mission when the Holy Prophet Muhammad was at Makka preaching to the idolators against their false deities. It is asserted that once, while the Holy Prophet was reciting out his revelation (i.e. the Quran) before the idol-worshipping Makkans, as he came to the words referring to the names of three idols, "Have you considered Lāt and Uzzā, and another Manāt" (chapter 53 verses 19–20), the devil put it into the Holy Prophet's mind to add the spurious words: "these are exalted females whose intercession is to be sought". This concession to Arab idolatry, according to the story, greatly pleased the idol worshippers. Then God acted to cancel this satanic insinuation, restoring the purity of His word, and in another passage (chapter 22 verse 52) reminded the Holy Prophet that sometimes the devil can exploit the human desires of prophets, altering their revelation accordingly, but that God always annuls any such corruption.

It is this story which forms the basis of the view put forward in the much controversial book *The Satanic Verses*. In his English translation and commentary of the Holy Quran, Maulana Muhammad Ali has conclusively refuted this whole account. We quote below from his footnote to verse 53:21. (*Muir* referred to below was an English author on Islam.)

"Verses 19–21 are made the basis of the false story of what is called the 'Lapse of Muhammad' or 'Compromise with idolatry' by Christian writers. Certain reports by Wāqidī and Ṭabarī are the sole authority for this charge against that incessant preacher against idolatry, every incident of whose life condemns it as a bare falsehood. . . . The fact is that the story was quite unknown to the earlier Muslims. There is not a single trustworthy hadith that lends support to this story.

“Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, who died as early as 151 A.H., does not mention the incident, while Muir’s earliest authority, Wāqidī, was born more than forty years later. It is stated in the *Baḥrain* that when questioned about it, Ibn Ishāq called it a fabrication of the *zindeeqs*. And the famous Bukhārī, the most trustworthy authority on the sayings of the Holy Prophet, was Wāqidī’s contemporary, and his collection of sayings contains no mention of the story.

“As regards Wāqidī, all competent authorities entertain a very low opinion of his trustworthiness. The *Mizān al-ʾItidāl*, a critical work on the lives and characters of the reporters of Hadith, speaks of Wāqidī as unreliable and even as a fabricator of reports. As regards Ṭabarī, Muir himself represents him as guilty of ‘indiscriminate reception’. As against these two unreliable authorities, ‘those who reject this story are highly learned men’ (see the commentary *Rūḥ al-Maʾānī*). The six collections of reports known as the *Ṣiḥāḥ Sitta* (or the *Six Reliable Works*) do not mention it at all, and contain instead a report which essentially contradicts the story of the so-called compromise.

“Internal evidence, too, is against the story. We are told that instead of verse 21 the Prophet read the words: *Tilk al-gharānīq al-ʾulā wa inna shafāʾata-hunna la-turtajā*, i.e., *These are exalted females whose intercession is to be sought*. But the insertion of these few words in a chapter which is wholly directed against idolatry is quite out of place: v. 23 condemns idols; v. 26 denies their intercession; v. 28 condemns the giving of names of female deities to angels, and so on. . . . Moreover, if the Prophet had made any such compromise, it could not have been a sudden event, and traces of it would have been met with in other chapters revealed about the same time. But a perusal of these shows clearly that the Quran’s condemnation of idolatry was never marked by the slightest change.”

Commenting on the other verse (22:52), which allegedly refers to the devil inspiring revelation in accordance with a prophet’s human

desires, Maulana Muhammad Ali writes in his footnote 1701:

“This story has been rejected by all sound and reliable commentators. Thus Ibn Kathīr says: ‘Many commentators relate here the story of the *Gharānīq* ... but it is from sources not traceable to any Companion’. According to Rāzī, *commentators who aim at accuracy and truth say that this story is false and a forgery*. Baiḍāwī makes similar remarks.

“... Moreover, it is absolutely inconceivable that such an important incident as the Prophet’s having accepted the intercession of idols should have been mentioned in the Quran eight years after it happened. The 53rd chapter, in which the change is said to have taken place, was revealed before the fifth year of the Prophet’s call, while this chapter was revealed on the eve of the Prophet’s departure from Makka. That more than half the Quran should have been revealed during this long period without a single reference to the alleged story, and that it should then have been quite unnecessarily referred to in a chapter where it is quite out of place, is alone sufficient to give the lie to this story.”

It is the prime duty of Muslims to stress that the criterion of the truth of a reported event from the Holy Prophet’s life is *not* that it is found recorded in a classical biography or history of Islam. The report must be consistent with the irrefutable facts of the life of the Holy Prophet contained in the Quran and the works of Hadith, the Quran being the *contemporary* record of his life and times, whose authenticity is admitted by friend and foe alike. A report clearly at variance with these key sources is false, no matter how classical or voluminous the work in which it may be found.

An example of the neglect of these sound principles was the book *Muhammad*, by Martin Lings, which is replete with fairy tales of the same category as this story. On what grounds it was awarded a prize of five thousand dollars by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Pakistan in 1984, we are utterly at a loss to understand.

# In the Face of Religious Abuse

*The response which Islam teaches*

The Holy Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said:

“The Muslim who mixes with the people and bears patiently their hurtful words, is better than one who does not mix with people and does not show patience under their abuse.”

(*Mishkāt*, Book: *Ethics*, ch. *Gentleness, modesty and good behaviour.*)

The question we examine in this article is: What are the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad about how Muslims should respond to verbal abuse against their faith. There is not only definite guidance about this in the text of the Holy Quran and the Sayings of the Holy Prophet, but also there is the practical example of the Holy Prophet himself. We are not dealing here with how a Muslim should reply to criticism of his faith, but specifically with how, according to Islam, one should react when offended and hurt by painful words used against our cherished beliefs.

Firstly, the historical fact must be noted that, throughout his life, the Holy Prophet Muhammad faced verbal abuse on very many occasions. Never did he have anyone punished for merely abusing him or the religion of Islam. The Holy Quran actually records the accusations made against him by his opponents (e.g. that he was insane, or that he fabricated his revelation), and it answers these charges, but does not require any kind of punishment to be inflicted on the accusers. The Quran has itself, therefore, given permanence to these allegations and the replies thereto, obviously anticipating that similar charges would be made by critics at later times. If such abuse or criticism could weaken faith, why should the Quran itself have quoted so much of it from its opponents' mouths?

## Teachings of the Holy Quran.

The Holy Quran tells Muslims:

1. "You will certainly hear much abuse from the followers of previous books and from the idol-worshipping people. And if you are patient and keep your duty — this is surely a matter of great resolution." (3:185)
2. "Many of the followers of previous books wish that they could turn you back into disbelievers after you have believed . . . but you should pardon and forgive." (2:109)

In connection with these verses, it is recorded in the Hadith collection *Bukhārī*:

"The Messenger of Allah and his Companions used to forgive the idolators and the followers of previous books, as Allah had commanded them, and they used to show patience on hearing hurtful words."

— Book: *Commentary on the Quran*, ch. 16 under *Sura 3*.

Addressing the Holy Prophet, God says in the Quran:

1. "Bear patiently what they say." (20:130 and 50:39)
2. "Obey not the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and disregard their hurtful talk." (33:48)

In all the verses quoted above, Muslims are taught to bear their feelings of hurt and anger with patience, and to ignore the abuse.

### **Withdrawing from company.**

Muslims are told:

"When you hear Allah's messages disbelieved in and mocked at, sit not with them until they enter into some other discourse." (4:140; see also 6:68).

These verses deal with the case when the religion is being mocked and derided (as distinct from being criticised). A Muslim is required to do no more than to withdraw from such a company, and even that only while the mocking continues, and to rejoin the same company afterwards. Any criticism underlying the abuse must, of course, be

answered. But the response to any sheer abuse, ridicule or mockery is withdrawal of oneself from the company.

### Some incidents from the Holy Prophet's life.

1. A man called Suhail ibn Amar had a voice suited to oratory, and used to employ this talent in making speeches against the Holy Prophet. He was captured by the Muslims at the battle of Badr and brought before the Holy Prophet. A Muslim suggested that some of Suhail's teeth should be knocked out to disable him from speaking well. The Holy Prophet said: "If I disfigure any of his limbs, God will disfigure mine in retribution".
2. Once when the Holy Prophet divided some wealth among his followers, one man accused him to his face of being unfair and told him: "Fear God, O Muhammad". After the man had left, the following conversation took place between Khālid ibn Walid and the Holy Prophet, as recorded in *Bukhārī*:
  - Khālid: "Shall I strike off his neck?"
  - Holy Prophet: "No, perhaps he is a man who says prayers."
  - Khālid: "There are many people who pray, but what they say is not what is in their hearts."
  - Holy Prophet: "I have not been commanded by God to cut open people's chests to see what is inside their hearts."

(Book: *Maghāzī*, ch. 63.)

Here a man insults the Holy Prophet to his face, and a Muslim asks permission to kill the man. The Holy Prophet advances the possibility of there being some good in the culprit, but Khālid argues that the man's prayers are only for show. The Holy Prophet then makes it clear that we cannot know about people's motives or sincerity, but have to accept that what they are doing is in good faith.

3. Some Jews, when addressing Muslims, would distort the greeting *as-salāmu alaikum* and say it as *as-sāmu alaikum*, which means "death be upon you". When they once addressed the Holy Prophet in this manner, his wife Āisha retorted back in the same words. The Holy Prophet disapproved of this reply and said that God did not like harsh words.
4. Once there were four men who spread an accusation of immorality against the Holy Prophet's wife Āisha. Their accusation was ultimately proved to be false because they failed to back it up with any witnesses. One of the four men, Mistaḥ, used to receive monetary support from Hazrat Abū Bakr, Āisha's father. After this incident, Hazrat Abū Bakr swore never again to help Mistaḥ. The following verse was revealed to the Holy Prophet on this occasion:

"Let not the possessors of grace and means among you swear against giving to the near relatives and the poor and those who had to flee in God's way. Pardon and overlook. Do you not love that God should forgive you?"  
(24:22)

Hearing this, Hazrat Abū Bakr exclaimed: "Indeed, I certainly love that God should forgive me". He then resumed providing assistance to Mistaḥ, as before. (*Bukhārī*, Book: *Testimony*, ch. 15.)

Note that this allegation was not made against just an ordinary Muslim woman, but the wife of the Holy Prophet, and therefore it struck at the holy household at the centre of the religion of Islam, which was required to be a model of purity for all Muslims. In view of this, the forgiveness taught in the above verse becomes *all the more generous and magnanimous*.

If Muslims today were to follow and proclaim these teachings of Islam, they would earn respect and admiration for their faith, its Holy Founder and themselves in the eyes of all reasonable people in the world.

## Nature of Religious Prejudice

From the work *Barahin Ahmadiyya* (Part V) by  
Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

It should be remembered that indulging in mere squabbles, abusive language, harsh words and foul talk which, out of one's low desires, is claimed to be done in the name of religion, while one does not correct one's own evils nor create a true connection with the Real Beloved, and the attacks of one group upon another in the manner of beasts, without human decency, displaying every kind of viciousness under the guise of supporting the faith — this foul technique is not worthy of the name *religion*. Lamentably, such people do not know why they came into the world, and what is the real and chief object of this brief life. Rather, they remain ever blind and of an impure mind, and call their bigoted feelings as *religion*.

In support of their imaginary god, of whose existence they have no proof, they show rudeness and impudence in the world. What use is that religion which does not worship a living God. Such a god is like the dead body carried in a funeral, only moving by the support of others; if the support is removed, it falls to the ground.

If the followers gain anything from such a faith, it is only bigotry. They entirely lose feelings of true love for God and real sympathy for mankind, which are the best of qualities. When they meet a person who disagrees with their religion and creed, taking this difference to heart they become inimical to his life, property and honour. If a person of another faith stands in need of them in some matter, they abandon justice and fear of God, and want to destroy him utterly. The mercy, justice and sympathy, which is the highest quality of human nature, is entirely eliminated from their nature, and the fire of bigotry kindles a wicked savagery in them. They know not what is the real purpose of religion. These are the evil people who care not at all for truth or true knowledge of God or purity, and give the name *religion* to their own low urges. They spend all their while in futile

disputes and controversies and foul talk, while not finding the time, even in their dreams, which must be spent in solitude with God.

Their work is to denigrate, insult and defame the righteous, while their own inner selves are totally and obnoxiously unclean. On their tongues are many tall claims, but their hearts are far from God. Wallowing in the muck of the world, they claim to be reformers of the people. They cannot listen to anyone with a fearful heart, nor bear to give a reply patiently. They consider everything in Islam to be objectionable, without even one good thing. Curiously enough, they are happy in this state, and when they do harm to a person of a different faith they consider it to be a work of great virtue or a display of courage and manfulness.

It is a pity that in this age most nations believe this prejudice to constitute *religion*. We do not exclude Muslims in general from this reprehensible behaviour. They will be called to account more in the sight of God because they were given the religion called *Islam* whose meaning God Almighty has Himself disclosed in the Holy Quran as follows: "*Nay, whoever submits himself whole-heartedly to God, and does good to others*" (2:112). That is, there are two parts of Islam. The first is to be so engrossed in seeking the pleasure of God that, discarding your desires, you place your head at the Divine threshold to attain His pleasure, and the second is to do good to all mankind. What an admirable religion, based on good and virtuous principles from whose teachings they have deviated so very far. This ruination came about when there was a departure from the teachings of the Holy Quran, intentionally or by mistake, because any departure whether from the text or the sense deprives one of the grace of God. By *departing from the text* we mean that a man is an open denier of the word of God, and by *departure from the sense* is meant that although he is not a denier outwardly, yet is so overwhelmed by the weight of custom, tradition, self-interest and alien teachings that he cares not at all for the word of God. (Pages 19-20 of the first edition, published 1908.)

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