



The Light

International Organ of the Centre for the worldwide
Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam

The *only* Islamic organisation upholding the finality of prophethood.

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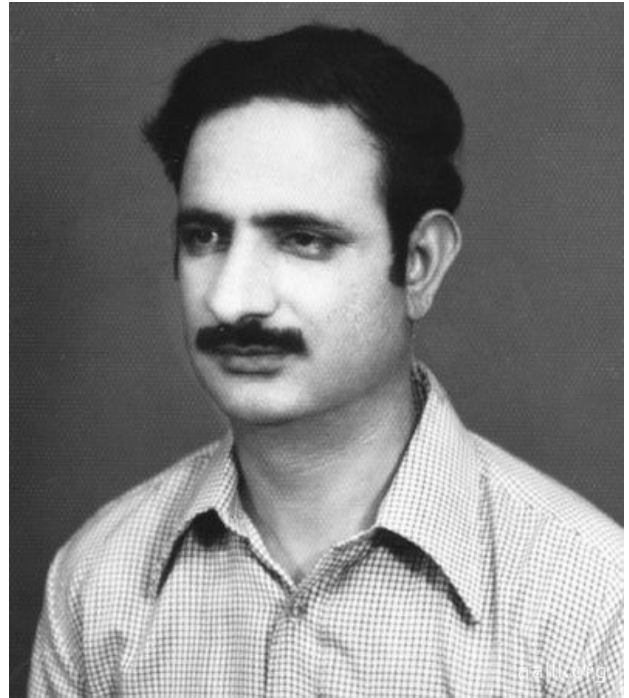
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A special issue of *The Light* remembering all our martyrs, especially

Imam Muhammad Anwar *Shaheed* of the UK jamaat



بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

The Call of the Messiah

by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad,
the Promised Messiah and *Mahdi*

Awake, therefore, and arise, and be watchful that you may not stumble and fall, and that you may not have to set out on your last journey in a state which may in reality be the state of unbelief and faithlessness. Know and understand it clearly that the hope of salvation and success in the next life does not entirely depend upon the acquisition of this ceremonial knowledge and learning; but there is an imperative need of the heavenly light which drives away and dispels all kinds of doubts and suspicions, and puts out the flames of greed and selfish desire, and draws toward the true love, devotion and obedience of the Most High God....

It is really a matter of great regret that whatever zeal and enthusiasm you display in the propagation of these ceremonial activities and sciences, you devote not even a small fraction thereof to the heavenly dispensation. Your life has been devoted mostly to such matters which,

زندہ اسلام کو کیا تو نے۔ حق کو باطل دکھا دیا تو نے
جی کے مرنا تو سب کو آتا ہے۔ مر کے جینا سکھا دیا تو نے

in the first place, have no concern whatsoever with religion, and if there be any relation, it is of a very trivial and trifling nature, far behind and below the real object. If you have those feelings in you, and the fine wisdom, which takes straight to the true goal, you should not take any rest unless you have attained to and achieved that real object.

Ye people, you have been created for the love, knowledge and obedience of the Most High God, Who is your Creator and the true object of worship and adoration; and until this thing which is the prime purpose of your crea-

I Shall Love All Mankind.

tion be manifestly displayed in you, you will be lagging far behind the true salvation and success. (From Victory for Islam)

Remembering Muhammad Anwar Shaheed

Talk at the Lahore Ahmadiyya Centre,
Wembley, 3rd April 2016

by Dr Zahid Aziz

(Note: It was decided by our Jamaat last year that the Sunday Meeting in April should be named after our late Imam, Mr Muhammad Anwar, who was martyred on 9th April 1986 while visiting the country of Guyana to attend an international convention of our Jamaat.)

I begin by reciting the following verses of the Holy Quran:

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ
وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمُوتَ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ
وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ
وَالْكُلُوبِ وَالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّبْرُ الصَّابِرِينَ

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمُ مُّصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ
أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ

“O you who believe, seek assistance through patience and prayer; surely Allah is with the patient. And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah’s way as dead. Rather, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive. And We shall certainly try you with something of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits. And give good news to the patient, who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: Surely we are Allah’s, and to Him we shall return. Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord; and those are the followers of the right course.” (2:153–157)

The expression “Surely we are Allah’s, and to Him we shall return” is recited at someone’s death. But in the Quran it has been related particularly to the suffering of any kind of loss in the way of Allah. Everyone suffers these kinds of losses, and it is sad in all cases, but those who strive in the way of Allah are by their own

choice undertaking more loss than others. Muslims, when persecuted at Makkah, could have chosen to recant their faith, or after their migration to Madinah they could have refused to defend themselves and surrendered to the Quraish. By adhering to Islam when at Makkah, and by agreeing to fight in order to maintain their religious freedom when at Madinah, they put themselves in the way of suffering loss. The Quran records that their unbelieving relatives said about them: “If they had been with us, they would not have died, or been killed” (3:156).

Their opponents did not have anything against them personally. No one hated the Prophet Muhammad (s) or Hazrat Abu Bakr (r) as individuals. They were against their beliefs and religion. By trying to kill them they were trying to kill Islam. This is why the Quran says, as quoted above: “And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah’s way as dead. Rather, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive”. They cannot be called dead because the religion they were defending was still alive.

The Quran also says: “O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah, as it ought to be kept, and do not die except as Muslims.” (3:102) How can we be ordered not to die when dying is not in our control? The meaning is that we are told to lead such lives that whenever death comes upon us, which we don’t know when, it finds us in a state of obedience to God. If God causes a person to die when that person is working in God’s way, then it is a judgment by God on the high spiritual rank of that person, for everyone in this world to see. The Holy Prophet Muhammad said: “He who is killed in the way of Allah is a martyr; he who dies a natural death in the way of Allah is a martyr; he who dies of the plague (in the way of Allah) is a martyr; he who dies of cholera (in the way of Allah) is a martyr.”¹

The word for ‘martyr’ in Arabic is *Shaheed*, which means a witness. One who devotes his life to the cause of Islam so that even at the time of his death, by whatever means it comes, he is working for that cause, is himself a witness and an evidence to the truth of Islam. As regards those who die a natural death, or from some illness, during a period of life when they were engaged in the service of Islam, it can be said

1 Sahih Muslim, Book of Imarat, ch. 51.

that they died during a part of their life when they were in a state of submission to Allah. But as to one who is murdered because of his devotion to Islam by an enemy, he was in a state of submission at the very moment of his death. At the very moment of being struck down by the enemy, he was an obstacle to the evil design of the enemy and (whatever he may have been doing at that moment) he was a symbol of service to Islam, whom the enemy felt had to be removed out of the way. Thus such a person is granted the highest spiritual rank by Allah in the next world.

Looking at the above hadith, if a person deliberately made himself catch plague or cholera, and died, would he be a martyr? Obviously not. It should happen to him by means outside his control. Similarly, a person who brings death upon himself, who presses the button or ignites the device which causes his death, cannot be a martyr. And if he aims to kill innocent people by his own death, then he is dying in a state of gross disobedience to Allah.

In many hadith, the Shaheed are classified with the prophets, and even have precedence over prophets in how soon they reach heaven. The Holy Prophet was once asked, "Who will be in paradise (jannah)?" He replied: It will be prophets, the Shaheed, children who died (this applies to all humans), and those who were buried alive.²

It is also in hadith that the shaheeds are of different ranks in the hereafter, some higher than others, depending on their level of faith and good qualities in the lives they led before being martyred.³ It was also said by the Holy Prophet that if someone has the desire to be a Shaheed, then even if he dies in his bed at home, he is a Shaheed.⁴ Presumably, such a person will be leading a very righteous life in his aim to become a Shaheed. So even without being killed, he is a Shaheed.

The Holy Prophet has ruled out that someone who is a hypocrite can become a Shaheed even by fighting in the way of Allah and being killed.⁵ The same applies to anyone who fights for some worldly reward, or to achieve fame, or to boast of his exploits, or for his tribe and country, and not in the way of Allah.⁶ If he is killed, he is not a Shaheed.

A man asked the Holy Prophet if his sins will be forgiven if he were killed in the way of Allah.

The Holy Prophet at first replied, Yes, his sins would be forgiven provided that he was patient and sincere in the undertaking to fight in the way of Allah. Then he asked him to repeat the question. When the man repeated the question, the Holy Prophet gave the same reply but added: "except the sin of leaving a debt".⁷ It looks as if that man owed a debt to someone, and the Holy Prophet reminded him that if he went to fight, without discharging the obligation of repaying his debt, and is killed, Allah will not forgive him the sin of neglecting this duty. It is clear therefore that martyrdom cannot be achieved by anyone by the mere, single act of being killed, but it requires leading a righteous life and dying in that state. In the Quran, where it says, "Surely Allah has bought from the believers their persons and their property — theirs (in return) is the Garden" (9:111), it describes such believers as follows: "They who turn to Allah, who serve Him, who praise Him, who fast, who bow down, who prostrate themselves, who enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and who keep the limits of Allah — and give good news to the believers." (9:112)

Drug dealers, smugglers, and the like, who suddenly discover religion one day, and the only thing they then do in the name of Islam is to commit some atrocity, are far, very far, from fulfilling the above criteria.

Thirty years ago, martyrdom was a very rare occurrence. Today we find that, for example in Pakistan, dozens of people are killed in a single bombing incident and they are described as martyrs in the news. There was the Lahore tragedy of only a week ago, on Easter Sunday. No doubt these are very sad, tragic and distressing deaths of innocent people — may Allah have mercy on them all. But, if we want to be realistic and level-headed, it doesn't mean that they acquire the high spiritual status of martyrs who made all kinds of sacrifices for Islam during their lives, so much so that their

² Abu Dawud, Book of Jihad.

³ Tirmidhi, Book: Virtues of Jihad, ch. 14.

⁴ Sahih Muslim, Book of Imarat (Leadership or Government), ch. 46.

⁵ Mishkat, Book of Jihad, Section 3.

⁶ Sahih Muslim, Book of Imarat, ch. 42, 43.

⁷ Sahih Muslim, Book of Imarat, ch. 32.

lives ended on a note of sacrifice. And those who kill these ordinary members of the public by blowing themselves up are also declared as martyrs by their supporters. It would be infinitely better if the so-called martyrs on both sides, i.e. the perpetrators and the innocent victims, had remained alive and were just ordinary Muslims.

The Quran says: "And those who flee in Allah's way and are then slain or die, Allah will certainly grant them a goodly sustenance. And surely Allah is the Best of providers. He will certainly make them enter a place which they are pleased with." (22:58-59)

Those who flee in Allah's way were those who, for the sake of upholding Islam, left their homes where they were persecuted and went elsewhere. If they suffer death as a result of this, Allah promises them a spiritual sustenance in the afterlife. Fleeing or migrating in Allah's way also includes going to other lands to spread the message of Islam. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad wrote in a book in 1894: "He who goes to the Western countries purely for the sake of Allah to preach Islam, he will be one of the righteous ones, and if he meets with death there he will be from among the martyrs (Shaheed)."⁸

We didn't come to Western countries "purely for the sake of Allah"; primarily it was for better education and careers. But our missionaries did come purely for the sake of Allah, people such as Dr Abdullah and Mr S.M. Tufail, who died here. And so did Mr Anwar, who went even further West from here to Guyana and was killed there.

Mr Anwar was not born into the Ahmadiyya Jamaat. After his early education he joined the education department of his province, then known as the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan. Out of his own interest, he also read Ahmadiyya literature given to him by some Ahmadi relatives. Impressed by the literature and by the character of the Ahmadis whom he knew, he joined the Jamaat. In this he faced opposition from his close relations. He continued his studies while in employment, and eventually was promoted to become Headmaster of a government high school. During the 1974 anti-Ahmadiyya riots in Pakistan, he and Mrs Anwar suffered loss of much household property which was looted and burnt by the rioters.

In 1979 Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan sahib asked Mr Anwar to devote his life for the service of Islam and he agreed. Initially he took long-term leave from his job. After a year's missionary training in Lahore in 1980, he came here to London as our Imam with Mrs Anwar in March 1981. After this centre at Wembley was purchased, Mr & Mrs Anwar moved into it in 1982.

At the end of his long-term leave from his post in Pakistan, he resigned his job to continue serving this Movement as our Imam in the UK. Here we witnessed that he had devoted his life to the cause of Islam, through the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, and he bore cheerfully, without the slightest complaint, all sorts of hardships in the conduct of his mission. Day in and day out, he was engaged in a struggle in the way of Allah, working with the utmost humility. We remember how Allah's name and His praise were ever on his lips, and his prayers were sincere, humble and charged with spiritual life. He was a deeply Godly man. Doing his duty, Mr Anwar went with other Lahore Ahmadiyya delegates to attend our convention in Georgetown, Guyana in 1986. After the convention had been concluded, and a few delegates from abroad were still there, he was murdered by an assassin, *inna li-llahi wa inna ilai-hi rajioon*. The assassin believed that by this vile and inhuman act, of shedding the blood of a wholly innocent and harmless person, he was performing a service to Islam. This violent extremism, uncommon at that time in 1986, then grew and grew to engulf almost the whole world, affecting most of all Muslim countries themselves. I conclude by saying that if you ignore victims of injustice because you don't happen to like that particular group, or you think they are small and unimportant, so what does it matter if they suffer, or you have the attitude of appeasement, namely, that the perpetrators of injustice will be mollified if you offer them a few victims, so that they will not come after you, then one day you will find that you also are a victim.

Let us pray that may Allah accept the struggles, services and sacrifices of Muhammad Anwar Shaheed, and raise him to the highest ranks in the after-life, may Allah grant perseverance to his bereaved relatives and widow, and

⁸ Nur-ul-Haq, Part 2, p. 55.

ever protect them, and may Allah enable us to take him as our model and example — Ameen.

Imam Anwar Shaheed

The Martyr of Guyana

by Ch. Masud Akhtar

(From *The Islamic Review*, California, USA, June-July 1986. Slightly abridged and edited)

Our hearts bleed at the assassination of our United Kingdom missionary, the late Imam Muhammad Anwar Shaheed at Georgetown, Guyana, in April. We hope all sane persons will join us in condemnation of this brutal, pre-planned and conspiratorial murder.

It is tragic that some wolves in the garb of clerics go about in the world of religion even in this era of civilisation and enlightenment. We know of no scripture which teaches murder, arson, looting and rape simply on account of a difference of opinion in religious matters. It is borne out by history that in spite of no scripture permitting compulsion in matters of belief, the establishment clerics in various eras have been sowing seeds of hatred and prejudice in the minds of their followers against their fellow human beings in the very name of God and Religion. Even presently, we Ahmadis and many other religious groups are being persecuted in many lands at the behest and call of the so-called fundamentalists whose ranks are swelled with the pseudo-religionists, the so-called establishment ulama [clerics].

Day in and day out, they exhort their ignorant followers to commit criminal acts against those who do not agree with their viewpoint in religious beliefs. Little do they realise that if all religious groups acted on the rules followed by these criminals, then millions of heads, including theirs, would roll in the dust overnight. By their black deeds, they in fact bring their religion into disrepute and do not render any service to God or the religion itself.

Religion, no doubt, is and can prove to be a fortifying force for humanity, but only if the establishment clerics let free the harmonising teachings of the religion, based on love, compas-

sion and understanding. It is high time that the professional priests and establishment clerics, who have hitherto ruled in the arena of religion as more powerful than God Himself, make way for God and the word of God. For the survival of the human race, it is essential that this usurping of power by the establishment clerics in the name of God and the religion should end, or else the religion that they stand for will drown along with them. Today's mankind can ill-afford any forces of hatred, prejudice and divisiveness, even if these be in the name of religion.

The hard choice we have to make is between establishment clerical-ism or religion as a force of unity. For us, the matter is crystal clear. The late Imam Anwar Shaheed laid down his life in the path of preserving freedom of conscience. Freedom of conscience is a gift of God to mankind. Honourable and righteous persons at different junctures of history have preserved this freedom, even by paying the price of laying down their lives. If it was not so, then truth, justice, righteousness and true religion would have been completely wiped out from the earth. If the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, and his companions had not made supreme sacrifices by suffering at the hands of their torturers for the sake of upholding the truth, the world would not have been enlightened by the light of the beautiful teachings of Islam.

Again, Iman Hussain and seventy-two family members of the Prophet's family laid down their lives for the preservation of the freedom of conscience rather than submitting to the tyrannical forces of injustice. Thus they have lit up the path of human freedom, which serves as a lighthouse for the forces of freedom for all ages. The state and the establishment clerics had joined hands in murdering Imam Hussain and his family members, as they have joined hands against us today. Imam Hussain is a symbol of freedom and righteousness for all freedom fighters, whereas Yazid and his partisan ulama are a symbol of evil and injustice. This war between Hussainiyat and Yazidiyat is an ever-continuing process. We are following in the footsteps of Imam Hussain by being ready to suffer even our lives for the sake of preserving our freedom of conscience and not submitting to the forces of evil. The ultimate victory of the forces of truth and righteousness lies in our willingness to smilingly suffer all ad-

versities and afflictions in the cause of the religion of Allah. The martyrdom of Imam Anwar is just evidence of our convictions and dedication in the cause we espouse. He is just one more victim of Yazidiyat, just another star on the path of Hussainiyat. By embracing death in the cause of Allah, he attained life. May Allah bless his soul.

Religious Pluralism and Civic Rights in a “Muslim Nation” 1

An Analysis of Prophet Muhammad’s Covenants with Christians

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(Published in Religions: 4 February 2016)

Abstract: This article examines the roles that religious pluralism and civic rights played in Prophet Muhammad’s vision of a “Muslim nation”. I demonstrate how Muhammad desired a pluralistic society in which citizenship and equal rights were granted to all people regardless of religious beliefs and practices. The Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad with the Christians of his time are used as a framework for analysis. These documents have received little attention in our time, but their messages are crucial in light of current debates about Muslim-Christian relations. The article campaigns for reviving the egalitarian spirit of the Covenants by refocusing our understanding of the ummah as a site for religious freedom and civil rights. Ultimately, I argue that the Covenants of Prophet Muhammad with the Christians of his time can be used to develop a stronger narrative of democratic partnership between Muslims and Christians in the “Islamic world” and beyond.

When assessing current trends in Muslim-Christian relations, there is a tendency to view this complex relationship through the prism of contemporary events alone. Any account of Muslim-Christian relations, however, must consider historical processes and events in order to position current developments in their appro-

prate context. Before embarking on contemporary issues affecting Muslim and Christian communities, a few historical issues are in order. In the modern era (1500–1945CE), the major part of the “Muslim world” was ruled by “Christian civilization”. During this period, the Islamic world, as noted by Armstrong, was “convulsed by the modernization process. Instead of being one of the leaders of world civilization, Islamdom was quickly and permanently reduced to a dependent bloc by the European powers”. Europeans assumed that European culture had always been progressive and that Muslim societies were backward, inefficient, and corrupt. European colonialists in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia also wreaked havoc by plundering Islamic economies and supplanting Islamic educational systems with secular or Christianity-based systems. These kind of colonial interactions had a decisive influence on the religious and political relations between Muslims and Christians, and shaped not least the mutual theological images and assessments of the other. Towards the end of European colonial rule, the Ottoman Empire crumbled, which created a vacuum in the Middle East that contributed to tensions between local inhabitants and external powers of interests. As World War I ended, “Westerners” - primarily the British - “saw an opportunity to bring modern coherence to [Arabia] by imposing new kingdoms of their own devising, as long as the kings would be compliant with the strategic interests of the British Empire”. When the British and other European powers (such as the French) drew up state borders in the Middle East, they paid little attention to the ethnic and religious division within Arabian societies. Muslims today see these historic events as influencing the development of Islamic societies as well as shaping perceptions of Christians living within their own borders and around the “Western world”.

In recent years, relations between Muslims and Christians have been described in light of a “clash of civilizations” in which the “Muslim world” (Islamic civilization) and “the West” (Christian civilization) are situated in binaries such as “us versus them”, “good versus evil”, “civilized versus uncivilized”, and “secular versus non-secular”. The “clash of civilizations” gained particular prominence after the events of 11 September 2001 and the West’s subsequent military operations in Muslim-majority countries, including Af-

ghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Libya, and Syria. The widespread violence caused by these invasions helped fan the flames of “radical Islam” and fostered opposition to the “Western world” and Christianity alike. To further complicate relations between Muslims and Christians, Muslims today might perceive “Christian nations” like the Philippines and the United States as severely oppressing Muslims, whereas Christians may perceive “Muslim nations”, like Pakistan, Iraq, and Sudan, as severely oppressing Christians. Furthermore, Muslim-Christian relations today are negatively shaped by centuries-old fears of “Islamic jihad” and the “Christian crusade”. Daesh - or otherwise known as the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (ISIS or IS) - has taken over a large swath of territory across Mesopotamia. Daesh has declared a Caliphate and professed a plan to establish political and religious hegemony over Muslims and non-Muslims across the Middle East and beyond. Concern over Daesh activities in the United States and the so-called “tide of Muslim migrants” coming into Europe have served to further the suspicion between Muslims and Christians. All of these political, religious, and cultural developments throughout history have shaped how Muslims and Christians perceive each other today; for example, there is currently a high level of “anti-Muslim world” sentiment in the United States and “anti-Western world” sentiment in Muslim nations across the globe. The United States, a predominantly “Christian” nation that frequently depicts itself as advocating for religious pluralism and civil society, has a “high to very high” level of social hostilities involving religion. A poll taken at the end of 2013 by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life showed that 60 percent of all Republicans exhibited prejudice towards Muslims. American citizens are particularly hostile towards Arab-Americans, many of whom are Muslim. A survey carried out in 2014 by Zogby Analytics, an Egyptian research group, found that only 36 percent of American citizens have a “favorable” view of Arab-Americans, a number that fell down from 43 percent in 2010. Comparatively, states that have a high percentage of Muslims almost uniformly persecute minority religious communities, especially Christians in Middle Eastern states. In Syria and Iraq, Chris-

tians have borne the worst of the religious persecution that has inflicted the Middle East in recent years. Daesh - and its extreme practice of Takfirism - has enslaved, killed, and uprooted hundreds of thousands of Christians. Iraqi Christians, who trace their origins back to the period of the first century, have witnessed 125,000 people leave their homes over the course of 2014 and 2015. Griswold goes so far as to say the rise of Daesh signals the end of Christianity in the Middle East altogether. Considering the persecution of Christians in Middle Eastern states, it becomes imperative to distinguish injurious treatment of Christians to that of Prophet Muhammad and his defense of Christian communities. This article discusses and sheds light on how “Islamic” groups such as Daesh disregard the Prophet’s commandments on how Muslims should treat, incorporate, and interact with Christians in their midst. Religious persecution in the United States and throughout the Middle East has made theologians, sociologists, and political theorists acutely aware of the need to foster pluralism and civility in religiously diverse nations. One potential source for creating this type of society is to treat the Covenants of Prophet Muhammad as a third foundational source of Islamic scripture that is entirely in line with the Qur’an and hadiths. While the Covenants have been known to scholars for many centuries and accepted as law by Muslim leaders, “traditional” Muslims and “modern” Western scholars have largely neglected these documents. Issues of the authenticity of the Covenants are one potential reason as to why these texts have been largely ignored. The Covenants of Prophet Muhammad with Christians have been the subject of much discussion among scholars. An examination of their authenticity is necessary in order to address the legitimacy of these document and the integrity of their messages. As a framework of analysis, four of the Covenants will be used to explore the concepts of religious pluralism and civic rights in a “Muslim nation”. These Covenants include: “The Covenant of the Prophet with the Monks of Mount Sinai”; “The Covenant of the Prophet with the Christians of Najran”; “The Covenant of the Prophet with the Christians of Persia”; and “The Covenant of the Prophet with the Christians of the World”. The authenticity of each of

these documents will be discussed on an individual basis below. It is worth noting that a complete and detailed account of the authenticity of these documents is outside the boundary of this paper. Morrow, however, provides a more in-depth break down on issues pertaining to authenticity. Christians have reportedly guarded the “Covenant of the Prophet with the Monks of Mount Sinai” for nearly nine centuries. The French knight Greffin Afagart, who performed a pilgrimage to Saint Catherine’s monastery between 1533 and 1534 CE, provided one of the earliest accounts of this Covenant; he noted the existence and presence of the original copy in his journal. Approximately two centuries later, the French General Marie-Joseph de Géramb (1772–1848 CE) confirmed Afagart’s observation and claimed that the document had been kept in the Covenant of the Holy Transfiguration of God at the Monastery of Saint Catherine. Hobbs, who also investigated the authenticity of the Covenant with the Monks of Mount Sinai, stated that the original document was transported in 1517 by military personnel of the Ottoman Empire from the Sinai region to the palace of Sultan Selim I in Istanbul. Indeed, as Ratliff argues, every authority has accepted 1517 as the year in which this Covenant was taken to the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Perhaps the most convincing argument for the authenticity of the Covenant with the Monks of Mount Sinai came from Burckhardt, who visited the monastery in 1816 and had the opportunity to examine the copy. He observed, “in a note it is expressly stated that the original, written by ‘Ali’, was lost, and that the present was copied from a fourth copy taken from the original”. Despite the observations made by the aforementioned travellers, “[t]he dating of many [of the Covenant with the Monks of Mount Sinai] bristles with difficulties”. As previous copies became old and brittle and started to disintegrate, “new copies of [this Covenant] were created for the

sake of posterity”. The claim, therefore, is that the existing copy of the Covenant with the Monks of Mount Sinai is a replica of the original. The monks from Saint Catherine’s Monastery have consistently upheld its authenticity since the early days of Islam, so have the Jabaliyya Arabs of the Sinai. It is also worth noting that scholars of the five schools of Islamic jurisprudence during the Fatimid, the Ayyubi, and the Mamluk dynasties recognized and respected the Covenants by following its orders in relation to the treatment of Christians. Scholars have also deliberated over the authenticity of “The Covenant of the Prophet with the Christians of Najran”. This Covenant first came to light in *Patrologia Orientalis*, a body of work that attempts to create a comprehensive collection of the writings by scholars of Eastern Churches including those of the Syriac, Armenian, Arabic, Coptic, Georgian, and Slavonic traditions. Scher, an Assyrian Chaldean Catholic archbishop of Sirt in South eastern Turkey, claimed that a copy of the Covenant with the Christians of Persia was based on a document found in the year 878/879. Scher’s claim stemmed from the testimony of Habib, a monk in the city of Brimantha who made a copy from a document originally found in the Library of Philosophy, where he was the curator. Scher, however, dismissed the authenticity of the document, claiming that it “was forged by the Christians so that the Muslims would spare them”. However, as Morrow duly notes, Scher “did not advance a single argument to support his allegations and did not present a shred of proof to demonstrate that the covenant in question was counterfeit”. While Scher also argued that the Covenant with the Christians of Najran is written in flawed Arabic, Morrow again points out that the Archbishop “does not avail himself of his linguistic expertise to support the supposition”.

(To be continued)

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam

Founders of the first Islamic Mission in the UK, established 1913 as the Woking Muslim Mission.

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